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The mirror of faith by which the children
of God may be known.

THE MIRROR OF FAITH

*By Which the Children of God
May be Known*

ERIK PONTOPPIDAN

Translated from the Danish for this edition



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FIRST PART

CHAPTER ONE

CONTENTS

1. Faith is the true characteristic of the children of God.
2. The proper meaning of the word faith, as used here.
3. It is highly important to have the right idea and understanding of faith.
4. The essential parts of faith are: in the understanding, knowledge and approbation; and in the will, confidence.
5. What is necessary to such knowledge and information.
6. How this knowledge must be heartfelt and combined with a full conviction.

1. The unfailing, genuine characteristic of the true children of God is faith alone; not as an active cause of our salvation, for the cause is only Christ with His merits; as a condition, however, on which salvation by grace is promised to us; or as a means by which Christ is laid hold on and embraced, and all salvation in Him is obtained. There is a multitude of Bible passages that go to prove this, the following being among the most striking ones:

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned (Mark 16:16). For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:16). He that believeth on Him is not judged; he

that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God (John 3:18). He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him (John 3:36). To Him bear all the prophets witness that thru His name every one that believeth on Him shall receive remission of sins (Acts 10:43). Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved (Acts 16:31). Without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto God (Heb. 11:6).

2. But in as much as the word faith may be interpreted in more than one way, many different things being designated thereby according to the mode of expression of Holy Writ, it follows that no one can make a test of himself according to this mark until he thoroly understands what kind of faith is meant in this particular case. Therefore, in order to arrive at a clear and definite idea, we must note that the word faith is used: 1) about faithfulness and constancy in promises either on the part of God (Ps. 146:6; Is. 11:5; Hos. 2:20; Jer. 42:5; Rom. 3:3) or on the part of men in their words and works (2 Kings 12:15; Jer. 5; Sir. 27:17); 2) about the Christian articles of faith and main points (Rom. 12:6) or the doctrine of the Gospel itself (Acts 14:27; Rom. 1:5; Eph. 4:5; Gal. 1:23); 3) about Christ Himself as the object of faith (the one to be believed on) and its refuge (Gal. 3:23); 4) about hope, in as much as there is a kind of metonymy or kinship of meaning between the two (1 Pet. 1:5); 5) about the power to work signs and miracles

(Matt. 17:20; Luke 17:6; 1 Cor. 12:10); 6) about a steadfast, open confession of the pure doctrine (Acts 14:22; Rom. 1:8; 1 Thess. 1:8; 1 Cor. 16:13; Rev. 13:10); 7) about a merely external confession of the Christian doctrine (James 2:19, 20, 24); and finally 8) about the flight of the earnest and penitent heart to Christ for refuge in order to lay hold on and embrace His merits; that is, about the true, saving faith, as may be seen in the passages referred to above.

Now, we must carefully note the eighth and last kind, for none of the others can be used as a criterion of a person's state of grace. A person may manifest great diligence in his official duty, great reliability in words and deeds; he may know the whole Bible and take all of its contents to be true; he may bravely and persistently confess the sacred doctrine—yes, even seal it with his own blood; he may, if the condition of the Church requires it and God wills it, work signs and miracles in the name of Jesus, and nevertheless go to hell; and he has not yet the true criterion of the children of God, for this is only the justifying and saving faith last mentioned.

3. We are now approaching our goal and begin to consider the essentials of the true faith. This is highly necessary: First, because the sworn enemy of our souls has, ever since the foundation of the Church, been endeavoring, with redoubled energy, by all kinds of heresies, to pervert and falsify this mainstay and wrest from our hands this sole shield by which his fiery darts may be quenched. Secondly, because many of the good and pure teachers them-

selves define the important matter of faith in very different ways, and tho they agree on essentials, they use dissimilar words and phrases, so that a mind that is not well trained finds it difficult to make out the right meaning. We could verify this assertion by ample proof, but we are afraid that it would lead to confusion rather than to a sound and definite understanding.

4. In harmony with most of the teachers in our pure Evangelical Church I would say that faith has three main parts, namely, knowledge, assent, and trust. Or if we, for the sake of brevity, unite the first two into one, assuming that assent presupposes and necessarily includes knowledge, since I can hold nothing to be true except what is previously known to me, it will amount to the same thing. The human soul has two main powers, namely, understanding and will, the former being generally attributed to the head, the latter to the heart. Before the Fall, the image of God dwelt in both of these. With the understanding, Adam knew and acknowledged his God; with the will he looked to God, clung to Him, loved and honored Him, and trusted in Him. The loss of this image was a darkening of the understanding and a turning away of the heart from God, the highest good. Now, if this image of God which was lost thru the Fall is to be restored in man, the restoration and renewal must take place where the Fall occurred, that is, in the understanding and the will. Thus, in a broader sense, faith is nothing but the image of God restored in fallen man, and must have its main seat and effect partly in the understanding, to which belong a vivid knowledge of and a sin-

cere assent to the divine truths instead of the natural blindness and resistance found in unregenerate persons;—partly, and mainly, in the will or the heart; to which belong yearning, confidence, love, and trust instead of the natural enmity and fear and estrangement from God. Now it is your duty to examine yourself to ascertain whether you are in the faith, whether the new man has begun to dwell in you by faith. But examine yourself both in the brain and in the heart, in the understanding and in the will.

5. What kind of knowledge have you of the nature of God? Do you know that He is the eternal Father of the spirits, the almighty Creator of all things, infinitely great, omnipresent, omniscient, infinitely truthful, merciful, and just? Do you know that in the one, indivisible essence of God there are three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit? Do you know that the Second One of these persons, urged by great mercy and love for all of us, who, on account of original as well as actual sin, were condemned to everlasting death—that He has come to this world, has actually united Himself with our human nature, and has, in our flesh and blood assumed by Him, tasted death in our place? Do you know that the fruit of His death is our eternal life, so that there is no damnation to be feared by those who by faith are in Him and, on the other hand, no salvation to be expected for those remaining separated from Him by unbelief and sin? Do you know that this Savior, who died for our benefit, did not remain in the grave, but on the third day actually rose from the dead, after having been in hell and having captured the prison?

Moreover, that in His visible and lowly state He remained not on earth, but before the eyes of many people ascended to Heaven and sat down at the right hand of His Father to pray for us? Also, that at the last day He shall return in power and glory to awake the dead and place some of them in eternal bliss, others in eternal damnation? Do you know that until such time God will maintain a kingdom of grace or fellowship of believers on earth? And that to these believers He sends His Spirit, who in the Word calls them, in Baptism regenerates them, in the Sacrament of the Altar strengthens them, in their whole life educates them as spiritual children for the Kingdom of God, cries in their hearts: Abba, Father! and urges them to prayer and to the praise of God? Do you know that it is God's earnest will not only that we shall be glorified and consummately blessed after this life, but also that we be converted, justified, renewed, and sanctified in this life? Do you know that all truths are firmly grounded in the book called the Bible, that this Book above all books is perfect and of incontrovertible truth, because, tho written by men, it is inspired of God Himself and, as His own Word, directly revealed to the prophets and apostles? Whoever knows that much is learned enough and does not need to know any more in order to be saved.

6. But to know and to know are two different things. Therefore, observe closely how we must know it, namely, with a heartfelt, thoro, and full conviction and assent, with a confession of the truth and also a practical appropriation and application of it upon ourselves. There are people who have often

heard the Word of truth, who have read it and understood it according to the letter, but who are either so perverse that they deride the truth, mock, denounce, and persecute it, or at least meet it with contempt, indifference, and drowsiness, and hence they experience no thoro conviction of it in their hearts. It is immaterial to them; they take their chances without any discrimination, and let the result take care of itself. But this is not the same thing as to believe, it is merely superficial thinking. It is not called full assurance (plerophoria) according to the words of Paul in Romans 4:21. It is not to have a full and firm conviction. It is not the hypostasis (Heb. 11:1) or to have a firm foundation and tangible possession of things unseen, past and to come, as tho they were present, standing here before one's eyes.

You just learn to understand, simply and straightforward, the living knowledge, of which our times have witnessed so much discussion. The eye of faith, enlightened by the Father of lights, thru Holy Writ, penetrates, by devout meditation, all the clouds of doubt, yes, penetrates all the heavens of heavens into the luminous, eternal essence of God; and, being accustomed to images and forms of nature and, contrary to the opinions of some, being unable to put these aside and get rid of them entirely, it makes use of them according to directions given by Holy Writ in order to visualize what is invisible, in order to arrive at a knowledge of the clear Heaven, filled with divine light, the majestic throne, Jesus at the right hand of the Father, and the unspeakable glory in every way. At times such an

eye of faith also takes a look down into hell and, as it were, draws a picture of the glowing pool in order to be reminded of God's justice. Sometimes it looks back thru the past and imagines that it has a vivid view of everything taking place from Adam to Christ and from the time of Christ to the present period in the Church of God—how wonderfully God leads His saints and how gloriously the prophecies and their fulfilment concur—so that they can make use of this in order to be absolutely sure of the omnipotence and truthfulness of God. At times it also looks ahead to the glorious condition which is in store for the transfigured bodies with their sacred souls; it pictures the soft bosom of Abraham, the white garments, the palms, the crowns, and the everlasting Hallelujah. Behold, of such ilk are the exercises of the knowledge of the believer also in other matters. It is a proof of the unseen, as certain as tho we did see it; of the unheard, as certain as tho we did hear it; of the incomprehensible, as certain as tho we did comprehend it; and this means that out of the Gospel, the saving doctrine, is made a hypostasis, a firm ground: We see ourselves lying as if dead in the misery of our sins, God the Father sitting in His judgment seat, the devil standing near by with his accusations, hell open; but on the other hand, Jesus dying on the cross, rising, ascending to Heaven, sitting at the right hand of the Father and praying for us; furthermore, ourselves cleansed in the blood of the Lamb, attired in the garments of the saved, and finally, death, the devil, hell, and sin lying under our feet; and all this, I say, not viewed in some flitting fancy, but impressed upon the pro-

foundest depth of the heart with power and effect and appearing as present. Val. Ernst Løscher says: It is a living knowledge, a living assent, a living belief. For a mere knowledge, reflection, or inference is like a dead product unless accompanied by such a powerful work of the soul, thereby acquiring vitality and strength, as we observe the same in ourselves. But this power is attained in fellowship with the heart, when the soul carries the thoughts and conclusions made in the understanding thither and, so to speak, has them coined and stamped in the heart. Therefore, in Holy Writ, the most zealous and most emphatic thoughts as well as a correct knowledge are ascribed to the heart; and in this sense a living knowledge, an insight with the heart's eye, and a heartfelt acknowledgment are required in spiritual matters (Dec. Evang.).

Where there is such a living knowledge there are also a heartfelt assent and confession necessarily connected therewith, then a person believes (except in the hour of temptation) as firmly as tho he saw and experienced these things. Hear what Scripture says on this point: I have set Jehovah always before me: because He is at my right hand (Psalm 16:8). O foolish Galatians, who did bewitch you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly set forth crucified? (Gal. 3:1). In Hebrews it is said of Moses: Accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he looked unto the recompense of reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured as seeing Him (the Lord Christ) who is invisible (Heb. 11:26, 27). This is clear and with-

out contradiction. Also note that tho faith and sight are counterposed (2 Cor. 5:7) in the ordinary, literal sense; there is also in certain ways a looking at things unseen (2 Cor. 4:18). Luther says: Faith leads you that you may see only abundant mercy and love; it is right to see God, not with bodily eyes (with which no one can see Him in this life), but thru faith, which sees His fatherly, friendly heart, in which there is no wrath or unforgivingness.

CHAPTER TWO

CONTENTS

1. Knowledge must be real and must be felt.
2. In most people it is dead.
3. Test of knowledge and assent, by which it is known whether it is living and actual.

1. Such are the knowledge and assent of souls of the correct faith, tho they vary very much according to the various gifts and degrees of grace, one being endowed with a higher, another with an inferior portion of grace and Spirit; whereas the knowledge and assent found in unregenerate persons is scarcely anything but a fancy in their vacant thoughts, when they occasionally proceed that far. It is a loose opinion which leads to no conviction and is not engaged in any proper exercise, hence it is quite different from Luther's description of it: Faith, it is said, is no sleepy or feeble thought in the heart, but the gift and work of the Holy Spirit Himself in us, transforming us and making new persons of us (T. I. Eisl. p. 412). Henr. Müller says: Faith is no fancy soaring about in the heart as a goose on the water, but a living, spiritual flame kindled in the hearts by the Holy Spirit, so that they desire and do what is pleasing to God. As water is heated by fire, so the Holy Spirit warms

the heart by faith and makes it tender and fluent to all good deeds (Heavenly Love Kisses, C. 16). Luther says: Faith causes the soul to be completely and entirely united with its Lord and God, it sets the soul all on fire, so that it assumes the nature and character of the Word itself,—and our brilliant Danish bishop, Dr. Jersin, says: It is the nature of faith that it cannot endure or tolerate anything sinful in its own make-up; but where it is present in the heart as faith and trust, not as opinion and doubt, there it transforms the whole nature of the person, so that in heart and memory, in mind and understanding, in affections and desires, in the will, in the movements and use of his limbs he becomes an entirely different person, who is kindled with love of God, and by the same love is led and compelled to hate everything that God hates, and by might and main to do what is dear and pleasing to God and his Savior Jesus (Troens Kamp og Seier, Part II, C. 3).

2. From this description it is clear that the brain-faith or merely superficial understanding, knowledge, and assent found in most of the Christians of our times is something very different from the heartfelt, thoro faith. For how do many persons know Christ? Is their knowledge of such power as to enable them to deny all un-Christian inclinations and, according to the admonition of Paul, to depart from all unrighteousness when they mention the name of Jesus? Sad to say, so impotent is their knowledge that from their life it is impossible to make out whether or not they profess the Christian religion. Their knowledge is not only

impotent, but many a time it is erroneous, mutilated, and defective. Indeed they are willing to acknowledge the grace of God as saving, but not as a disciplinary grace. They are willing to know Christ as given us of God unto righteousness, but the wisdom and sanctification appertaining thereto are none of their business. They are willing to accept Christ as dead and risen for them in Jerusalem, but not in so far as He should be living and working in them every day even now. They are willing to know Christ only as a High Priest and Redeemer, but not as their King and Prophet who ought to be obeyed. Furthermore, from this it follows that as the knowledge of the hypocrite is wrong and mutilated, so are the assent and confession connected therewith. For instance: the comforting doctrine of God's infinite mercy and the forgiveness of sins thru the death of Christ may be sought and in some manner approved by hypocrites; but the no less necessary doctrine of the means of obtaining God's mercy—such as conversion, faith, etc.—is slighted by them. They do not even desire to be properly convinced of the most urgent need of a true conversion, because such considerations might impede their course in sinful lusts and cause worry in their souls. In this manner the lip-Christians do not observe the Word of God in its entirety, but they cut it up into sections and take as much of it as serves their purpose, according to their perverse notions about those things.

3. Now, test your knowledge and your assent, O you miserable and impenitent sinner! See whether the former is impotent, and the latter wrong and

mutilated. You claim to know God, but do not keep His commandments. Jesus says: If ye were blind, ye would have no sin (John 9:41). You say that you believe the Word of God, and approve the truth. But in what? In the things that least concern you. Why do you not give unconditional assent to the powerful denunciations as well as to the sweet promises? If God is truthful when He offers you Heaven, why not equally so when He threatens you with hell? The latter truth in particular you have to apply to yourself until it makes a deep impression, for it concerns you; but the former does not while you follow your own sinful ways, under the wrath of God.

O infidel sinner, why do you separate what God wants to be kept together? Why are you so ready to believe when God says: Behold, I blot out all thy sins! Thy sins are forgiven thee! Peace be with thee!—while you are so very slow to believe, nay, never thoroly believe when it is said: Tribulation and anguish shall be upon every soul of man that worketh evil? If you believed this as firmly as tho you already sat in hell, it would be impossible for you to wallow in sin and shame, uncleanness, gluttony, drunkenness, luxury, pride, malice, anger, wrath, and similar mortal sins which engross you so completely that if you were thoroly convinced that God had turned this matter quite upside down, offering Heaven as a reward for the works of the flesh, you could hardly make greater efforts in practicing them. How can you have any conviction that hell is a reward for wickedness? How is it possible that you can seriously assent to and heartily approve

of the words of Paul when he says that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Behold, your deceitful heart makes secret exceptions from this plain verdict; hypocritically you suppose that you can sin without being punished; in your heart you say, Well, this Scripture passage is true, but it is not apt to be strictly applied to me. Presumably there is no real danger.

The question now is: Do you, under such conditions, seriously assent to and give way to the power of the Word of God and trust Him? No, indeed not. You make Him a liar, as John says. If you believed rightly, you would live rightly, too.

O infidel sinner! You may boast of your knowledge and education and build on that as a foundation. Behold, you are more blind than the deluded Pharisees and scribes; for of them it was said, at any rate: Had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. But you say that you know Jesus, and yet you tread Him under foot and slight the blood of the covenant by which you are redeemed. You claim that you give heed to the Word of God, and behold, you do not even believe as much as the devils; for of them James says that they believe and shudder, by which they plainly show that they have no doubt as to the denunciations of God. But you, impenitent sinner, do not shudder, tho you are doomed to hell as surely as they are. You laugh and carry on in your sins; if you heard a thousand penitential sermons your heart could not be reached so as to cause penitence or a change of your mode of life; you bless yourself in your hypocritical heart, which speaks of peace when

there is no peace in sight. No matter how strongly God denounces and condemns in His Word, you say to yourself: There is no danger, and like the one mentioned in Deut. 29:19 you say: I shall have peace. But if you have refused to believe while in this world, where you have had Moses and the prophets, you shall, like the rich glutton, experience it thruout eternity, and faith will then come to you as a palpable, tangible thing.

Now, therefore, whoever desires to know whether his knowledge is living and his assent sincere must first observe whether the fundamental truths of the Christian doctrine are truly and seriously accepted by him, and none of them rejected or slighted. Let him next note closely whether this knowledge is so vitalizing and this assent so powerful that the acknowledged and accepted truth sinks down, as it were, from the brain to the heart and there operates and arouses a heartfelt yearning or love for God and aversion to sin. If the acknowledged truth is utterly unable to accomplish any of these things, or if it is unable to make the person live according to the demands of his convictions, but permits his heart to remain as before or as it could be by nature if it had never heard of the evangelical truth—then, behold, such a person should not believe that he is in the state of grace; for it is a sure sign that unbelief still rules in spite of his knowledge and superficial faith. So the seed of the living Word still lies on top of the rock, so it does not yet carry the soul to regeneration, not to speak of growth or ripeness in good things.

When, for instance, a depraved sinner comes to

hear a sermon and, with an unchanged mind and an imperturbed heart, hears of God's terrible jealousy of sin and the unceasing vengeance with which His righteousness threatens all impenitents, in time and eternity; next, the great patience with which God waits for his conversion; the infinite grace and mercy that He offers the penitent; the indescribable loving-kindness with which He receives the erring but returning sheep, embraces them, kisses them, and divides all the good things of His house with them; especially how He has given His Son in death for them, how His Son, the meek Jesus, out of incomprehensible love has endured such pain, done so much, suffered so much in order to save people from hell—when, I say, an unconverted child of the world hears this, reads it, reflects on it, takes it to be true and does not doubt it, and yet by no means feels the right working of it in his soul toward a blessed change and a renewal of his mind, but remains firm in his determination to live in his sins and his worldly ways as before—what then? Has such a person no knowledge? Yes, indeed, but it is a dead knowledge. Has he no assent, no conviction? Yes, indeed, a lifeless conviction. And how can this help him on the way to salvation? He has not yet half a mustard seed of faith, nor the knowledge of faith, the assent of faith; for those things are never idle, but active. Hence it is said in Gal. 5:6 that faith is working (not idle) thru love. In the first epistle of John there are many testimonies as to the dead knowledge, especially in 2:3, 4 and 3:6. And the statement in I Sam. 2:12 that the sons of Eli were base men and knew not Jehovah, clearly

serves to prove our contention. Luther puts it this way: They did not ask for the Lord; but the original text and the best translation have: they knew not the Lord (Jehovah). Did not the sons of Eli, the high priest, who were themselves servants of the church—did not they know the Lord? No, they knew Him not, says Scripture: they did not know Him in a heartfelt and thoro manner. Similarly, their brethren, all infidels, tho many of them are men of great learning, fail to know the Lord of Glory; if they knew Him, surely they would not crucify Him as they do in their daily life.

Therefore, if the acknowledged truth begins to live in me, if I really know and acknowledge God's righteousness so that it terrifies me, if I really know and acknowledge God's goodness so that I am moved to love, thankfulness, and obedience in return, if I really know and acknowledge the crucified Jesus so that the remembrance of His bitter suffering may serve me as an antidote against all poisonous sins, then I can say and sing:

*Comes a wicked thought to me,
All at once my soul doth flee
To my wounded, bleeding Savior,
Who permits no vile behavior.*

Or: *Whether I am asleep or awake, may Thy holy death and suffering, etc.:* Behold, thus I can take comfort and be sure that I have a living knowledge, a living assent, and therefore the first two parts of faith are in my possession.

CHAPTER THREE

CONTENTS

1. Confession and assent must produce a fervent appropriation.
2. Tempted by the devil, especially with regard to God's mercy thru Christ.
3. Also with regard to religious truths in general.
4. How such temptations must be met.

1. As far as faith is a matter of understanding, we must note one more point, which has already been touched upon in a few words, namely: The assent to the truth of some promise of divine grace must necessarily cause an appropriation and application thereof to the individual believer himself; in other words: the person concerned must not only regard God's promises as truthful in general and with regard to humanity as a whole, but especially and particularly with regard to himself. The person must know that God also means him and points to him, that the matter concerns him. He must be able to say in his heart: I know that my Redeemer liveth; He gave Himself for me, He died for my sins, and arose for my justification; and with Thomas: My Lord and my God! Many a person may suppose that this warning is not particularly necessary with regard to his belief that Christ has died for him, in as much as the word "all" must surely include him. Indeed this is in itself true, and it always (except in the hour of temptation) works

successfully as long as faith has peace and is not involved in any great struggle.

2. But when the angry tempter, the foe of our faith, comes and, as it were, raps us across the fingers and hands, with which we should hold fast Christ and appropriate Him unto ourselves in particular—when he wants to scare us away by showing our great unworthiness and fill us with doubt, when he quarrels and contends with us about the body of Christ, as he did with Michael about the body of Moses—then it is your part to see that you do not waver and reason like this about yourself: Well, who knows whether I have any part in Jesus and His grace? You have not behaved as you ought to with regard to your sins; it is only a matter of presumptuousness on your part when you take comfort in Him; others may do it, but not you; you have to give it up—it is too late.

Likewise: Who knows, maybe those are right who claim that Jesus died only for certain souls, and then, perhaps, not for you in particular? Or it may be other blasphemous and evil suggestions made by the devil to those that are tempted, besides the natural inclination of the heart to indulge in wrong notions about God, and in unbelief.

If you experience something like this, my dear Christian, while at the same time you love Jesus from the depth of your heart, avoid sin and have good intentions—then you must struggle against it the best you can and lay hold on passages of consolation and universal grace, for they are the best shield. Tell Satan to get out, for it is known that he is a liar from the beginning; and it is written

quite differently: For God so loved the world, etc. I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord Jehovah: wherefore turn yourselves, and live.

Therefore:

*If I were the vilest sinner
Which the sun does shine upon,
Satan filling up my inner
Life with all that's woebegone,
Falls as thick as desert sand—
Still to Jesus, God-and-Man,
I will flee with tears and sighing,
To myself God's grace applying.*

If you are not absolutely victorious at once, just remain calm, without giving the devil the least room or advantage; try to be busy with something else, and stem your excited, impetuous thoughts until the evil hour is past. Pray to your heavenly Father to take this spiritual cup of the cross away from you if it is His will. But you must not, on account of this temptation, by any means torment yourself with the notion that you have a false faith, or almost no faith at all. If this were true, you would have no struggle, and the devil would not be apt to try to take away from you that which he knew you did not possess. In such a case this envious spirit acts as the fox in *Æsop's Fables*: when he had lost his best ornament and given up his beautiful, long tail, he tried to persuade others to get rid of theirs, too. In as much as Satan can have no good confidence in God, he begrudges us that we still can have a happy confidence in the Lord, and he would be glad

to see us all thrown into despair, in common with him. Now that he neither has nor can have any part in Christ, he says, like that loose woman before the court of Solomon: the child shall belong to neither of us. But not so fast, Satan! Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.

3. What has been stated above with regard to the temptation that may be met with in the faithful acceptance and application of the merits of Christ, making this appear hard and difficult and at times quite impossible, applies with equal force to the different phases of the soul's surrender and assent to the divine truths. Many believing souls must often lament the fact that when they feel as tho they were most firmly established in a certain truth, the enemy of their souls stirs up a terrible storm, as we are told in the book of Job, for the purpose of completely overthrowing the building which they had founded on Christ, the rock of their salvation. Like Samson he takes hold of the main pillars of the house and tries to pull them down either by direct suggestion of blasphemous, infidel, and atheistic thoughts that pierce the brain like the swiftest arrows, carrying notions of this nature: Who knows whether there is any truth in the Christian religion? The Bible may be only man-made words and fiction; or he may assail the approval of men indirectly by means of intercourse with so-called free-thinkers, with indifferentistic, naturalistic, or absolutely atheistic men or books, gradually sapping the foundation and making one truth after another seem doubtful, until after a while the whole building is in danger of toppling over.

4. If the trouble is of the kind last mentioned, man himself can dispose of it, throwing the stumbling blocks out of the way, tho it takes time and effort to avoid such thoughts as one has formerly heard and entertained, and time and again he may revert to them against his own will. But if the trouble is of the kind first mentioned, he must watch and pray with redoubled diligence, confront Satan, that liar from the beginning, with Holy Writ and say, as Christ did in the desert: It is written! Moreover, let him keep his soul in patience and take comfort in the fact that an experience of this kind is to suffer sin, not to commit sin, as long as his believing heart does not really agree to it, but groans against it and is averse to it. That infernal bird of prey is impudent enough to swoop down upon the offering of our heart for the purpose of snatching away our faith; but thanks be to God, it does not hang so loosely: it is firm in Christ, and we chase away this evil bird by shouting and crying to our heavenly Father. Even tho veritable torrents of infidelity and blasphemous thoughts rush against us, we can, from the profoundest depth of our heart, which is still above the tide, cry to God: Lord, help us, we perish! Furthermore, this is our consolation, which we find in I Peter 5:7. Having just spoken of the assaults made by the devil, he says: You know that the same sufferings are accomplished in your brethren who are in the world (I Peter 5:9). Yes, indeed: Let it be known to you, my pious soul, that you are not, as you may suppose, the only one tormented in this manner. If you could look into the hearts of other people, you would perhaps find much

of a similar nature, or even worse than what you have experienced. John Bunyan, that fine teacher, in his biography tells of a number of distressing conflicts which occurred in the course of his religious life. Finally he says that among all the afflictions that he had experienced, the worst one to endure was the temptation to doubt the nature of God and the truth of the Gospel. When this temptation assailed him he was completely exhausted, and his legs shook under him. How little did he think of the admonition to have his loins girded with truth, and of Ps. 11:3: If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do!

We have considered it necessary to touch upon these conflicts which are connected with the assent of faith, and also upon the manner in which they are overcome by the soul, in order to sustain the hope of many pious children of God; for in several instances I have become aware of the lamentable condition of such people, and I have often been told by them that they were afraid that they had no faith at all, yes, that they were children of infidelity and minions of the devil. The reason was, that to themselves it seemed as tho their souls were always wide open, so to speak; they did not realize that such darts touch and hit the head but not the heart, the understanding but not the will; and therefore, at the moment of their action, God, the righteous judge of hearts, charges them to the debt and account of the devil who produced them, and not to the wretched suffering man who ardently groaned against them. I said a while ago that a faith that proves great in combat and temptation testifies powerfully to a per-

son's state of grace; for the devil does not bother himself about those that he has in his claws, but about the believers. If your faith, my afflicted Christian, were a mere thought or fancy, like that of the hypocrite, why should the devil take such great pains to deprive you of it? Or how could such an imaginary faith endure a single one, not to say so many temptations and, tho at the cost of great travail, really become victorious?

Finally, in examining our assent or admission, it must be observed that as to said assent not only in the hottest moment of affliction but also outside of such active affliction, or in ordinary life, faith may be stronger or weaker in its assent, at one time more so than at another, more so in you than in some other person; and all according to the use of the sacred means, the Word and the Sacraments, and according to the grace and power of the Holy Spirit working thru them; thus it happens, I say, that even at a time when a person does not experience any particularly violent assault on the part of the tempter, the believing assent may be very feeble and faint. I shall mention only one instance, namely, from the Table Talks of our sainted Dr. Martin Luther, who certainly was a heroic believer. In speaking of St. Paul he says: I hold that St. Paul himself could not have believed it as strongly as he speaks of it. Indeed, I am sorry to say that neither can I believe so strongly as I speak, preach, and write about it, and as other people are apt to think of me. —We may quite properly assume that Luther in this passage does not refer to temptations having a brief duration, but to his life and the condition of his heart.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONTENTS

1. Confidence is the third and main part of faith.
2. How it necessarily flows from the living knowledge and assent.
3. Found only in a few people.
4. How a person may deceive himself, confounding the theoretical with the practical appropriation, a mere knowledge with the real knowledge.
5. Distinction between confidence and carnal security.

1. Another step in this self-examination is to take a view of the third part, which is the confidence and the sweet trust in God's grace in Christ Jesus, and which properly is to be ascribed to the will and the heart. According to the natural order and succession, this may be said to be the last part of faith; but according to its power and importance it deserves to be put at the head: hence theologians are not unreasonable in calling it the chief part of faith, its heart, its pith, its very essence—yes, properly speaking, it is faith itself. Therefore, in examining faith we shall dwell mainly on this part of it.

2. As to the nature of this confidence in general, it consists in this, that the laboring, troubled, faint soul takes refuge in God, the highest good, surrenders itself completely to Him, lies down, as if in a soft lap, to rest in the promises of His sweet

grace, expects and receives from Him all the good things which it needs for time and eternity. This confidence is very close to and flows directly from the above described confession and conviction. For when I properly know and acknowledge God as the only true and highest good, my needy soul, yearning for salvation from God, does not hesitate long until it wishes to become united with that highest good. And when such acknowledgment and conviction also bring out the fact that God is not only the highest good intrinsically, but also is glad to impart of His goodness to others and cheerfully floods His needy creatures with streams of grace, behold, with the first wish is soon united the hope of being a partaker of this grace. But now, when knowledge and conviction inform the heart that this supremely good God, according to the word of Sirach, not only hates nothing of all that He has made, but chiefly and particularly is a friend and lover of men's souls, having in the beginning honored man with His own image and, after the loss of this thru the Fall, having sent His only begotten Son to the world for the salvation of fallen man, in order that all those who believe on Him should not perish but have eternal life,—then, behold, from this description the soul conceives a true confidence in and friendly reliance upon its Lover and Benefactor, reasoning somewhat as follows: Now that God gave me His Son, He cannot but love me and seek what is best for me. Now that His Son has died for me, His precious death cannot be without power and fruit. I already have proofs enough to convince me that I can freely depend upon such a Friend. Well, let me be of good

cheer: without regard to the scolding and denunciation and condemnation which I must hear in my sinful conscience, I shall venture to trust in my God and, like a tired child, lie down in my Father's lap. If He would disown me and not endure my presence, why did He call me thru His Son: Come to me all ye that labor and are heavy laden? If He wanted to shut me out, why did He open a door to me and a safe way to Christ? If He wanted to condemn me, why did He ever release me from condemnation? If the love of the Father, the merits of the Son, and the gracious work of the Holy Spirit were something peculiar, something intended not for all but only for certain persons, one might easily deceive himself by accepting such means and depending on them for his own salvation. But glory be to God, this is not the case. Therefore, with a penitent heart I may boldly step up to the mercy-seat and be sure that God will not turn me away when I come to Him.

Behold, this is the fruit of the above mentioned knowledge and assent in the understanding, namely, that the will and longing are quickened, that a way, so to speak, is paved from the head to the heart. God could indeed create faith in our heart directly, or without any previous knowledge and assent to the Word, as may be seen in new-born children who, however, are believing when baptized. But this is not God's common, ordinary economy; for according to this it is His will that those who can use their understanding shall, in the first place, acquire a knowledge of and assent to the truth, and

then pass on to the longing, love, and confidence of a believer.

3. Now that the step last mentioned really constitutes faith, the preceding being rather only a door and means thereto, it unquestionably follows that all those deceive themselves and lack the saving faith who have only a mere knowledge and assent. And, sad to say, to this class belong most of our so-called orthodox Christians. As a rule they have some knowledge of the Gospel, some assent, a persuasion and conviction that the Word carries the truth. Indeed, even as to the particular, personal appropriation and application they may often convince themselves more easily than do true believers engaged in struggles and afflictions that the promises of grace are intended for them in particular, and that Christ has made amends for them too; for this is exactly what often makes them feel secure; and Christ, the rock of salvation, becomes to them, thru their own fault, a stumbling block and a savor from death unto death. But what is yet lacking? What do these imaginary believers still need? Oh, absolutely nothing but faith itself, the real essence of faith, namely, the confident refuge of a penitent heart in God, the trustful appropriation of the death and merits of Christ.

4. Some one may say: But this has been said before, and this they have already done by applying it to themselves in particular and stedfastly believing that Christ died for them in particular. To this I must answer, No. These two things cannot be confounded without peril. They come very close together; but yet they are different, and are

separated in such a manner that one may be found in hypocrites, the other only in true believers; and right here lies, according to my humble view, the subtile boundary line which to many is invisible and yet in fact separates the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God from each other, or the saving faith from the false faith. The fact of the matter is this: there is a merely scientific or theoretical, and a practical and real appropriation of the merits of Christ. The first one is held in common by hypocrites and true believers; it consists in this, that secretly a person reasons within himself as follows: I know that Christ died for all human beings; I am a human being; therefore I know that Christ died for me. But the other appropriation, which is not only theoretical but also practical, and is found not merely in the understanding but in the profoundest depth of the soul, and is to be found only in true believers—is an ardent emotion in the will and the heart, which, thru a sense of sin and sincere penitence and acknowledgment of its transgressions, is urged and impelled by a profound yearning to come to Christ, to embrace Him as the true Horn of Salvation raised up in the house of David, to lay hold on Him as He lies wrapt up in the Word and, pressing Him heart to heart, to say: My Friend is mine, and I am His, and to sing:

*This is no dream, no vain ado:
I feel as tho in heaven,
Because it is so plain and true
My sins are all forgiven.*

*My Jesus suffered in my place,
My burdens did He carry;
I count upon His boundless grace,
In Him my soul shall tarry.*

This is no doubt what is aimed at when the Apology for the Augsburg Confession says: In order that no one shall think that faith is a historical knowledge, we add this: To will and to accept the offered promise. Thus, also, it is not enough to the justifying faith to believe, that is, give assent to this, namely, that sin is forgiven thru Christ, and that one is accepted to grace, and also wills such things; but he must also accept it (that is, grace and forgiveness).

This important difference between the theoretical and the practical appropriation of the merits of Christ, which, however, is almost unknown to many, is discussed by Dr. Heinrich Haepfner, a distinguished Leipzig theologian, in his Dissert. de Actibus Essentialibus Fidei justificantis, No. 9, 10. And Dr. Martin Friese, of Kiel, also points to this distinction in his Dissert. de Motibus internis a Spiritu S. excitatis, C. I, Sec. I.

For the benefit of simple folk I shall make this plain by means of an illustration. Here we have two entirely different things before us. One thing is that I am told that a pious man is living at such and such a place, and that I know and believe this as surely as tho I had seen him; further, that I believe this man's generous heart is bent on helping all needy people by means of his great wealth; still further, that in his treasury he keeps a sum of money

which he, on certain conditions, intends to give me, and which I may have at any time I choose, as surely as tho I already had it in my hands. This, I say, is one thing. But here is an entirely different thing: that I consider myself to be in great need of this gift, that I am longing for it, that I go to the man, speak to him about it, and stretch out my hand and take the good gift from his hand. Behold, in the same manner, here we have two different things: First, to know God's exceeding grace in Christ, to hold and be fully convinced that since it concerns all it will not be withheld from me in particular; secondly, to seize upon this grace with fervent yearning and a penitent heart—yes, to grasp it and shut it up in the heart, as it were. Now, the first appropriation of the merits of Christ may be called a confidence in so far as man in his thoughts depends upon and does not doubt that God will be gracious to him and all others; but the latter appropriation is, strictly speaking, what we call confidence, or the confidential yearning for and refuge in God's grace in Christ, which it holds and to which it clings: an exceedingly important process which takes place in the profoundest depth of the spirit, and is found only in spiritual and regenerate persons.

From all of this it may be seen plainly enough that altho the saving faith in all its bearings and complete meaning embraces the three parts as defined above: knowledge, assent, and confidence, and therefore called *habitus aggregatus* (a condition of the soul caused by the cooperation of several powers of the soul), in its working and in practical experience its true and real essence is not to be found

in the two parts first mentioned, as the children of the world are apt to suppose, but strictly speaking only in the part last mentioned, namely, confidence, or trust, which we shall discuss more fully in the following.

5. But while we, by this plain statement of the characteristics of the children of God, are taking great pains to guard against and avoid all ambiguity, all cause for doubt in the minds of pious people, all self-deception in the minds of bad people, it is necessary to be reminded of this experience, that altho only regenerate and converted persons can have any confidence in God, there is, nevertheless, in unregenerate persons something which externally looks like a confidence and is held as such even by unbelievers to their own harm. Thus that jack-of-all-trades from hell tries to ape our dear God in his doings. Therefore, this false confidence is nothing but a carnal security: a lip-Christian prattles to himself and others that he is so fond of his God, that he rests so sweetly on the precious merits of his Savior, that he is absolutely sure of his salvation. But alas, would that no one deceived himself, dreaming of Heaven until waking up in hell! The false confidence, ease, and trust is easily known by the fact that it has no good intention and can coexist with unrepented and unforgiven sins and with the very works of darkness, whereas the true, believing confidence is also most intimately associated with sanctification and its stedfast purpose. How, then, can it be different from what may be expressed in the following words? Where there is faith there must also be truthful confidence; but where there is con-

fidence there is also love; and where there is love there is upright obedience or intention to please the one we love and, as far as possible, to avoid arousing his ill will in any shape or manner. No one can deny the most intimate connection between these two things; and yet there are people who venture to boast of love without obedience, of confidence without love, and of a true faith without confidence.

But surely it is a cruel self-deception to trust in the grace of God at a time when one is absolutely outside of the state of grace. It is a devilish delusion to dream of nothing but peace when one is placed in the utmost peril. Who has confidence in an unreconciled enemy with whom he is in combat every day? Who would strike another person in the face and immediately lie down in his lap to sleep? No one is so blind and insane but the impenitent sinner who, in the midst of his un-Christian life, from day to day speaks strongly about confidence in Christ, whom he constantly antagonizes and combats, using all the members of his body, all the powers of his soul as weapons of iniquity. But, impenitent sinner, you must not depend on this false confidence. You come to God as a highly offended enemy, to whom you have not become reconciled by a true conversion. Who accompanied you to Him? Are you not afraid that a fire of vengeance may issue from the sanctuary of God and consume you as you bring in strange fire before the Lord? Yes, the strange fire is your very wonderful carnal security which belongs to no true believer but which you call childlike confidence, tho you are far from being a child of God; for as many as are led by the Spirit

of God, these are sons of God (Rom. 8:14). In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God (1 John 3:10). Therefore you must put no trust in God until you do sincere penance and change your life and mind and conduct, for otherwise you believe diametrically opposite to, not according to the Word of God; you mock God, who, according to Paul, is not mocked, that is, with impunity. Do not pray while in this condition, except for Spirit and grace to be converted. Furthermore, it is said: We know that God does not hear sinners (that is, impenitent sinners); but if any man be a worshipper of God, and do His will, him He heareth (John 9:31). Do not say, There is peace, there is no danger; for otherwise perdition shall suddenly fall upon you as upon the one who felt so secure (Luke 12). If you wish to know what follows your confidence, then listen to Scripture: The hope of the righteous is gladness; but the expectation of the wicked shall perish (Prov. 10:28). The hope of the godless man shall perish. His confidence shall break in sunder, and his trust is a spider's web (Job 8:13, 14). The hope of the ungodly man is as chaff carried by the wind, and as foam vanishing before a tempest; and is scattered as smoke is scattered by the wind, and passeth by as the remembrance of a guest that tarrieth but a day (Wisd. 5:14). And furthermore we shall see the great difference between carnal security and faithful confidence as we now pass on to a thoro discussion of the latter.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONTENTS

1. The real nature of confidence.
2. To believe and to come to Christ.
3. Kind and nature of this coming.
4. Feeble and strong faith.

1. The teaching of our true Church that the third and chief element, or the core and proper essence of faith, is confidence in God's grace thru Christ Jesus, does not mean that the word confidence is ample enough to contain the whole matter, but it has not been possible to find a more convenient expression. Hence it will be necessary to scrutinize the language of Scripture carefully, and more especially the following passages: Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16). Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by the way which He dedicated for us, a new and living way. . . let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith (Heb. 10:19-22). In whom we have boldness and access in confidence thru our faith in Him (Eph. 3:12). In these passages faith is plainly depicted to us as a trusting and confident going to God in the words last mentioned, the apostle putting *pepoithesis* (confidence) and *parrhesia* (boldnesses, daring) together, in order that the one may get light from the

other. But mark you well that both boldness and confidence are things that can be comprehended only by the understanding, but cannot be visibly and distinctly shown to the external senses; therefore the Holy Spirit has graciously added a word which is very easy to understand: Prosagoge (access or leading towards). Any one can easily understand what it means to come to one, to go towards and take refuge in him. Therefore it is by far most safe to use the very words of Scripture in describing the true nature of faith, using the word confidence as predicate, or as a descriptive term, and access as subject, or to denote the very thing to be described, saying: Faith is a confident and comforting going to God; or, Faith is nothing but to turn the heart towards God in confidence, to lead and incline it towards Him.

2. As to the term going to, or access, it may be said that it is strongly grounded not only in the passages referred to above, but even in many other Scripture passages, such as: Thru Him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father (Eph. 2:18). Thru who also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand (Rom. 5:2). In many places in Holy Writ we find instead of *to believe*, the words *to come*, which agrees very well with the term going to (access). Thus we read: Come to me (that is, Believe on me, Be consoled thru me) all ye that labor and are heavy laden (Matt. 11:28). Jesus said: And ye will not come to me, that ye may have life (John 5:40). Jesus said unto them: I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth

on me (to believe and to come are the same thing) shall never thirst (John 6:35). All that which the Father giveth me shall come unto me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out (v. 37). No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him (v. 44). Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me (v. 45). For this cause have I said unto you that no man can come unto me, except it be given unto him by the Father (v. 65). Jesus cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink; he that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water (John 7:38). In Revelation great stress is placed on this coming: And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely (22:17). Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price (Is. 55:1). That Luther, our sainted teacher, also thought of the true nature of faith only as a coming to God, we can see plainly enough from his explanation of the Third Article of our Christian confession of faith: I believe that I cannot of my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him.

Thus, faith is nothing but to come to God and Christ, to have access to and seek refuge in Him; not externally, in a bodily manner, as many people came to Christ in the days of His flesh, tho they were not united with Him in faith, or as in our day many sham Christians keep close to Him by exter-

nal service or with their lips, while their hearts are far from Him; but to come with the heart, with a heartfelt longing, with the loving, eager devotion of the will, impelled by the Holy Spirit. Thus it is explained by Gregorius Magnus: Not by the feet but by the affections, not by journeying but by loving (Lib. 21. in Job C. 4).

3. Now, this is faith, or said access, pure and simple. Let us further consider the nature and manner of this very access according to the above quotation from Eph. 3:12, namely, to have boldness and access in confidence. The case is somewhat similar to that of a sick child that expects all good things from its mother, runs to her and throws itself into her lap, trusting and hoping that it will be well received. But now that this confidence is not equally great in all persons, one heart being either more or less profoundly convinced than another, it is only fair that in this examination of the faith a line be drawn between the imploring confidence and the triumphant or jubilant confidence. Imploring confidence is the confidence which is yet small and feeble, manifesting itself only by a heartfelt longing, yearning, and craving, or, to use Biblical terms, by seeking and knocking, by hungering and thirsting. Of this kind was the faith of the miserable publican: God, be merciful to me, a sinner (Luke 18:13). So also the faith of the man whose son had a dumb spirit: I believe; help Thou mine unbelief (Mark 9:24). Likewise that of the terrified disciples: Lord, help us, we perish! Behold, many are those who in this manner come with confidence in God but in great fear and trembling (Mark 5:

33); with tottering (Is. 35:3), with palsied knees (Heb. 12:12). They grasp at the promises, but with weary, drooping hands. A confidence of this kind looks like a smoking flax. The father of faith himself felt this weakness (Gen. 15:8). On the other hand, the triumphant confidence is a strong, certain, and joyful confidence in the heart, which has now come so far as to touch its coveted treasure, as it were, and is so close to it as to receive power and consoling strength therefrom, is so sure of its position that it rejoices in a feeling of sacred immunity, challenging and defying all enemies and thereupon lying down sweetly, softly, and safely on the breast of Jesus, as John did at the supper. Of such a perfectly bold faith as this do those words of Paul savor: I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, etc. (Rom. 8:38); and I know Him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that, etc. (2 Tim. 1:12). Here the militant faith has fought until it has become victorious, the longing one has come to rest; a holy, spiritual security has been attained; there is an assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen (Heb. 11:1). This distinction, which to me seems very important, Dr. Joach. Lange (Antibarbar. Tom. II, Sec. I, Prop. IV, 11, 12) has in mind when he points out the remarkable significance of the manner in which the word is combined with other words. In Holy Writ we sometimes find the expression to believe in or into Christ (pisteuein eis ton Christon), sometimes to believe on Christ (pisteuein epi to Christo). The former expression refers mainly to the longing of faith for Christ; the latter to the quiet, restful confi-

dence of faith on or in Him, tho in such a manner that in the longing there is confidence, and the confidence does not wholly exclude longing and yearning. For it is the same faith manifesting itself now in one way, now in another and, therefore, designated now by one wording, now by another.

4. Therefore I say still once more that the true nature of faith in the first place is the advance, going to, and refuge of a penitent soul in God; and, secondly, in more robust souls an assured, bold seizure embracing God and Jesus Christ with all His merits and acquired benefits which the soul leans upon and rests securely in. These two things the sainted Scriver covers by the expressions: the longing and the embrace of faith; the beginning and the consummation of faith. In his Soul's Treasury: The essence of the saving faith is no doubt a heartfelt trust in the merits of Jesus Christ. But this trust may be viewed in two ways, in its beginning and in its consummation. A seed of grain falling into the ground shows its first sign of life by sprouting; next comes a tiny, frail stalk, which grows and grows until it becomes a fully developed plant (Part II, 5, 6). In the same place he uses another illustration making the faithful longing and embrace still more plain. He says: The sprout of a hop, pea, or similar creeping plant is not by nature able to rise in the air and stand up against wind and weather, but they have the knack of leaning upon and stretching themselves along supports and poles. Hence they may be seen creeping along the ground until they reach a tree or some other object, around which they wind themselves and fasten their little hooks, as may

be seen in the case of grape vines, pea vines, and similar plants. Similarly, when penitent souls begin to believe, everything is done in great feebleness; with the heart they lean upon Christ, and their groans are the hooks by which they cling to Christ. They behold their Redeemer, but with weeping eyes—thru a mist, as it were, so that they cannot know Him thoroly and find complete satisfaction for their heart in Him. They believe, but with fear; not as those doubting God's universal grace and complete redemption acquired thru His Son, but as those who cannot yet confidently appropriate to themselves the universal promise and wholeheartedly depend upon it (10).

CHAPTER SIX

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1. Example of a soul which was greatly worried while examining its faith.
2. Found satisfaction by means of P. du Moulin's short tract on faith.
3. Especially by means of the distinction between the direct and the reflex faith.
4. What explanation and basis these terms have in Holy Writ.
5. Necessary cautiousness in testing the faith.

1. In order to throw more light on the matter, I shall now briefly introduce to my dear reader what I am just coming to, namely, the main subject, a plain discussion of which was my strongest inducement to write this treatise and publish it for the benefit of the public.

I know a soul in Christ who a few years ago was visited of God by means of a strong inclination and prompting to investigate her faith very carefully. Now, she made the mistake of not abiding exclusively by Holy Writ and its plain testimonies, but depended mainly on human writings and theological explanations. Therefore, as a punishment that she well deserved, the many frail reeds, instead of supporting her, penetrated her hand, so to speak, yes, even her heart, causing still more worry. It worked in this manner: She found a very feeble faith in herself. Indeed, her whole heart was hostile to sin,

and filled with a sincere purpose of sanctification and fervent yearning for God; but the heavenly consolation, the true boldness or assurance of faith were wholly lacking. There seemed to be a perpetual seeking without finding, a perpetual crying without an answer, a perpetual hunger without anything to satisfy that hunger. She did not find Christ, the aim and goal of her faith, according to her own wishes, and so she doubted whether she had really seized Him at all; or else, she thought, He would immediately have clasped her in His loving embrace and given a glad echo and answer to her plaintive voice. She wanted to feel powerfully that the Holy Spirit was giving her direct and formal testimony. But the more she yearned in pain for this experience, the farther away from her it seemed to be. This troubled and worried her grievously, and made her fear that she had no faith at all. She wanted to live according to the words of Paul: Try your own selves, whether ye are in the faith, etc. (2 Cor. 13:5). But instead of trying herself and searching her own conscience, she tried God and searched in great anguish what degree of consolation and assurance of salvation she might find in herself, tho such things are not the work of man but of God alone. The result was the same as in the case of investigations actuated by jealousy: You look for what you are afraid of finding, and your search for assurances leads to nothing but perpetual doubt.

Similarly, this half despondent soul found more mental confusion than consolation even in many pious and learned men's devotional books, which she perused carefully, especially all chapters on the

subject of faith. Here and there those men would speak of the distinction between a strong and a feeble faith; but to her their discourses seemed so strange; one point seemed to contradict another, all of them, however, concluding in boldness, feeling, embrace, assurance. It seemed to her that some authors had attained to a decidedly manly age in faith and were highly favored of God. But they had not spoken cautiously enough in their writings: they had only given their own experiences, which they afterwards wanted to turn into a general rule. This was not milk, but hard food for a child's stomach. For in herself she soon found nothing of what others had found in themselves, and thus her state of grace became quite doubtful in her own mind, tho her heartfelt longing for God and her desire to walk in His ways remained entirely unimpaired.

2. By divine dispensation she finally obtained a copy of a small tract on the essentials of the justifying faith, by P. du Moulin, formerly royal court chaplain of Great Britain, who in other respects is not an unknown personage. Out of these seven or eight leaves constituting an appendix to the noble book on peace of the soul, she drew more consolation and light than from many bulky books that she had read; for here it was briefly and clearly explained how the real essence of faith is nothing but the refuge of a penitent soul in Christ, and how the consolatory feeling and the strong confidence derived from it are not an essential part of faith but rather its perfection. He says that those who describe faith as a full assurance of having obtained the forgiveness of sins in Christ Jesus do not properly compre-

hend the essence of faith, their description being rather a sketch of its perfection than of its nature and quality. It would be called a decidedly incorrect definition of a human being to say that it is a living creature having a well adapted, beautiful body, a glorious soul, great understanding, and manifold strength, such definition pointing only to a person's perfection, not to his essential characteristics, which entitle the homely and the silly as well as the beautiful and the wise, a baby as well as its father, to be called human beings: in the same manner he holds that faith is incorrectly described as a full, absolute assurance of our salvation in Christ, which indeed is the highest degree and perfection, but not the natural and essential form of faith, which consists only in a refuge in God, in embracing the merits of Jesus Christ, and may be found in one who has no boldness but more fright, yes, instead of assurance finds great stumbling blocks and much doubt. For who will doubt that the father of the epileptic boy had faith when he said, with tears in his eyes: I believe; help Thou mine unbelief (Mark 9) ?

3. P. du Moulin wants us to make a distinction between what he calls confidence of refuge and confidence of feeling. The former is generally found in those who are feeble but who, however, surely believe; the latter in stronger, more highly favored souls. Dr. Martin Friese, professor of theology at Kiel, in a recent publication pays close attention to this distinction made by Moulin. He says: Faith includes two things: first, that a person has a longing for Christ and flees to Him; secondly, that he apprehends and embraces Christ (or more properly:

feels and is sure that he has embraced Him; for as soon as an afflicted heart is really longing for Him it also believes and in a certain manner apprehends Christ) and rejoices in the assurance of the forgiveness of his sins (Dissert. de Motibus Internis Sp. S.) The former must be called the confidence of refuge, the latter that of feeling.

In my opinion the Latin language makes this distinction very clear. These are the words used: *Actio fidei directa et reflexa*. This means, as far as we are able to give it in our tongue: The action of faith, partly aiming directly at its goal, partly, after reaching this goal, returning and meeting the heart. The former, which is absolutely necessary, consists in this: a truly repentant and God-loving soul flees to Jesus with a fervent yearning, and devoutly seeks to lay hold on and embrace Him, looking to Him for its entire salvation and to nothing outside of Him, yes, utterly abandoning and surrendering itself to His will. This is the condition of the progressing faith. The condition of the resting faith consists in this: the believer has a strong sense and conviction of the validity of his faith and, accordingly, of his state of grace, or he observes in himself the direct and formal testimony of the Holy Spirit with his own spirit, and the seal of grace, the pledge of his heavenly heritage, so vividly and powerfully that from this, as well as from his gifts of sanctification, he can be sure of his justification and state of grace, rejoicing therein with ineffable gladness of soul and boldness. In short, directly a person believes on God, properly speaking; reflexively, a person believes that he believes, and is sure of his faith. The

rest in faith, again, is of two kinds, namely: either based on prudent reflection, or entirely heavenly, as may be seen from the first chapters of the Second Part.

4. To clarify our conceptions by means of comparisons, we may say that between the direct and the reflex faith there is the same difference as between seeking and finding, between coveting and possessing, between the shouting voice and the answering echo, between a stone thrown up into the air and the same falling down again upon the head of the one who threw it, as Sirach uses this comparison, tho in a different sense. The direct faith rises with yearning up to God; the reflex faith falls from above down into the soul again with a loving embrace and is, no doubt, the love of God which, according to Paul, is shed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which bears powerful witness with our spirit that we are children of God and, as in the case of Simeon, soon gives us the consoling answer and assurance that our prayer and faith are pleasing, and that we may be more bold in God. If I am not mistaken, the sainted Scribe has this double function of faith in mind when he says in his Soul-Treasury: As long as there is yet a sighing for God in a person, tho slight and feeble, so long the Spirit of God has not left him. The longing of faith for God's grace is originated by the Holy Spirit, thus coming from God and going to God, and returns again with a hidden power from God to the soul (P. 11, p. 12, 40). But in order that a spiritually afflicted soul seeking consolation and enlightenment may be sure that this important matter is no human subtlety but

a truth firmly grounded in Holy Writ, tho, as far as I know, up to date no one has discussed the matter thoroly; furthermore, in order that one may know shortly beforehand that it is only the progressing faith and not the reflex faith that belongs to the essence of saving faith, particular attention should be paid to the following Scripture passages, and more light on this subject may be expected from the subsequent chapters.

Paul expresses the following wish: The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15 :13). You will note that the apostle here speaks to such as were already justified, as may be seen from the following verse. Accordingly, these justified persons must already have had faith, namely, the progressing faith. What more can he wish for them? A full, abounding, that is, a strong hope, a great joy and boldness in faith; and what is this but the reflex faith, that faith which falls back into itself, as it were, and joyfully recognizes itself in a divine light and reflection?

The same faithful teacher pronounces the following prayer and wish upon his hearers: I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of

the strength of His might (Eph. 1:16-19). In the preceding verse (15) the apostle praises the Ephesians for their faith in the Lord Jesus; this is mainly *fides directa*; then he wishes for them what we have just heard, namely, a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God (to taste and see how sweet the Lord is; for, being believers already, they must have had the common and simple knowledge). Furthermore, he wishes that the eyes of their heart may be enlightened, to know what the hope of His calling is, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints is, and the exceeding greatness of His power to His believers. All these lofty things are, in my opinion, exclusively objects of the resting (*reflexa*), not of the progressing (*directa*) faith. Observe this, ye of feeble faith, that even in the Ephesian church there were many like you, but nevertheless Paul knew them to be true believers!

In 1 Cor. we find: We received . . . the Spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God (2:12). Thus there are two things: to receive gifts and grace from God, and thereupon to know and properly feel and perceive the glory and blessing of this grace.

These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God (1 John 5:13). Behold, here is a clear distinction between believing, and knowing or perceiving that a person believes. The hearers of John already believed with the progressing faith, but the great seal, the feeling of faith, God had not yet impressed upon their

hearts. John, by means of his writing, had to endeavor to enable them to receive it.

5. Now, because we always have such members of feeble faith and of spiritual poverty among us in the Church of God, yea, because they no doubt constitute the great majority of true believers, the teachers must be very careful not to break these bruised reeds completely, nor quench this smoking flax, nor, as Paul says, instead of befriending them, confuse their conscience and lead their poor souls into error. And yet this is done when a teacher who may himself be highly favored of God does not proceed cautiously enough in his sermons and writings, does not estimate the great difference, the exceedingly important difference between one and another working of the Spirit, thus failing to endeavor to administer the Word of Truth rightly, measuring others with his own yardstick and seeking in them the very advantages which he, tho undeservedly, may have above many, or in common with only the smallest part.

Therefore, in order to take safe steps in the necessary examination of faith, the Christian middle course must be followed exactly, demanding neither too much nor too little. For by means of the former the soul may be thrown into great perplexity, or by the latter into security and damnation. What I mean is, that on the one hand we must not define the characteristics of faith too loosely; for no matter how feeble and simple the beginning of grace may be, it gives to the soul some attributes which excel all power of nature and cannot by any means be found in an unbeliever, no matter how virtuous he may be.

But on the other hand, the same cautiousness is needed so as not to bend the bow too far by making out that the heavenly reflection and the powerful sensation of faith is the essence of faith itself, thus demanding from children what can be found only in young men and fathers. I have found that in our day nothing is more apt to cause doubt and discouragement in upright Christians and to prevent true thankfulness to God than the reading of certain mystical and other books by many people who are trying to find out whether they have the right faith and are in the state of grace. In one way these books may be good, but they do not apply to the case of such persons. Books of this kind induce them to contemplate attributes peculiar to a higher degree of grace, and when they fail to find these very attributes in themselves, they immediately give it up, while they should only praise God and thank Him for the benefits granted, if not to themselves in particular, to their brethren, at any rate; by prayer and the greatest possible purification of the heart they should strive to become meet for a higher degree; they ought to keep their souls in patience, demand nothing of the dear God by might and main, nor become impatient or despondent, but be content with their Spirit of grace, considering themselves unworthy of the same and saying, with Jacob: I am not worthy of the least of all the loving-kindnesses, and of all the truth which Thou hast shown unto Thy servant (Gen. 32:10).

In an examination of one's self, therefore, the question should not be: Do I have the strong, reflex faith which thoroly knows itself with a heavenly

boldness? But the question is: Do I have a truthful and sincere faith, have I noticed the first beginning of grace in me, and have I made use of it? In 1 John 2:13, 14, the entire number of those in the state of grace are divided into three kinds: children, young people, and fathers. The first concern here is to be sure of being, at any rate, a child in Christ. And in order to learn to know this we must consider only those attributes which are not found exclusively in young people and fathers but which they have in common with children. For it cannot be denied that even nurselings and sick people are really living, tho they have not the perfect vitality of healthy and grown people.

Having most diligently investigated the difference between the so-called direct faith and the reflex faith, or between the consolatory feeling and boldness of faith, and the essence of faith itself, I shall now pass on to a more detailed consideration of each of these subjects in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONTENTS

1. The proper and direct faith consists, above all, in longing or in an eagerly yearning refuge in Christ.
2. The characteristics of this longing as judged by the condition of those in whom the Holy Spirit causes it thru the Gospel; by its aim or object; and by its kind and quality.
3. This longing compared with hunger and thirst.
4. The thirst of spiritually hungry and empty souls.

1. A person really and in truth begins to come to Christ, he is on the way to salvation and stands in the faith as soon as the power of his soul to will something, as soon as his longing, his yearning, his eager desire earnestly move in him towards Christ. But it works this way: First, a person is convinced in his conscience by the Law of God that he is a dead and guilty sinner who in no wise can save his own soul; next, he looks around for help, and as he finds that there is salvation in none other than the Lord Jesus (Acts 4:12), he permits himself to be drawn from the Law to the Gospel, assents to this, and believes that Jesus is the Christ of whom all prophets in the Old Testament and all apostles in the New have unanimously testified that all who believe on Him shall have forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation in His name. Now that this conviction, this living knowledge and appreciation are firmly established, behold, there is bound to arise, thirdly, a con-

fiding and faithful longing and yearning for Christ, or for the grace of God in Christ, which cause heartfelt and fervent groans, breaking forth in a confident exclamation: Abba, Father! The truly penitent, contrite soul, with the profoundest devotion, arouses all of its powers to lay hold on Jesus the crucified One as its refuge and anchor in distress; it strives to get very close to Him, to embrace Him, to kiss Him, to press Him to its heart; and when it makes no real headway in this practice of its faith, being hindered either by intruding worldly thoughts, by the devil's incentive to unbelief, doubt, and inconstancy, in which he takes advantage of the residue of original sin in man, or by the spiritual indifference and foolishness about which Joh. Dan. Henschmidt has written a very edifying little treatise—it is indeed apt to worry and mourn on account of this shortcoming and drawback, yet it does not desist, but keeps on longing; and if it please the Lord to put it to death in a spiritual sense by taking away all consolation, it will still put its hope in Him, still cling to Him; it actually wrestles with God in its supplications, like Jacob, and will not let Him go until, sooner or later, it receives His blessing.

This is indeed the saving and absolutely necessary faith which a Christian may take as a reliable proof of his sonship. This is to flee to the cities of refuge. It is to seek Jehovah while He may be found and to call upon Him (Is. 55;6) not merely by saying Lord, Lord (Matt. 7:21), but with a flaming devotion, a heartfelt worship in spirit and in truth, as stated in Acts: Whosoever shall call on the name

of the Lord shall be saved (2:21). To believe is to will and desire (Apol. Aug. Conf.)

2. But when it is said that the true faith, in its beginning and first feebleness, consists of a supplicating confidence and longing for Jesus, I beg you, impenitent sinner, not to deceive yourself by thinking, for instance: Well, if the true faith is only to long for the Lord Jesus, it stands to reason that I have the true faith. But do not reason and make up your mind too quickly; rather test your longing whether it be of the right kind, thus: First, test the cause of it and ask, Why? Secondly, the aim and purpose, asking, Why? Thirdly, test the nature of your longing by asking how and in what manner you are longing.

Those persons in whom the right longing is found must needs have a true knowledge, conviction, and sense of the woe of their sins. Moses must drive you to Christ, and, like David, you must say: Out of the depths I cry unto Thee! Your soul must labor and be heavy laden (Matt. 11:28) if it is to find consolation in the invitation of Jesus. It must know of no refuge from the avenger of blood but to flee to Him who has atoned for our sins with His blood. This confession must be made:

*Tho strong and free
And tho I flee
To the ends of the earth in terror,
My sins remain
To cause me pain—
They seem flashed from a flaming mirror.
I cry to Thee:
Deliver me, etc.*

The four leprous men may serve as an illustration. They said: If we say, We will enter the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there; and if we sit still here, we die also. Now, therefore, come, let us fall unto the host of the Syrians (2 Kings 7:3). But you, O sinner, have never realized your own wretchedness, you have never been seriously troubled by your sins, and therefore your refuge is groundless and your longing utterly false. How can he long for the physician who does not know and feel his own infirmity? Hence the Savior says: They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick (Matt. 9:12).

Furthermore you must test the aim of your longing. It must be nothing but God, and more especially the God-man Jesus Christ. But how is your yearning soul to consider Him? Pay close attention to this answer: Such as He was appointed of God, not only unto justification and redemption, but also unto sanctification and wisdom, according to His three offices as High Priest, King, and Prophet. Certain it is, that for justification you only have to look upon Jesus as High Priest and Redeemer, who thru His blood once entered into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption (Heb. 9:12). Besides, you must not forget that He also is your King whose holy will you must live up to; your Prophet, whose true teaching you must accept; and it must be your wish and aim to do these things. Just on this score many people deceive themselves: They are quite willing to have Christ in so far as He is given them of God unto righteousness, but not in so far as He is offered to them unto holiness and

wisdom; they put asunder that which God hath joined together; and they may accept Christ as High Priest, but not as King and Prophet. Many wish to share the benefits of the death and merits of Christ, but not to be like the image of His innocence to the utmost possibility. If they have a longing for Christ, their sole aim is to escape punishment for their sins, not to be set free from sin itself and, in union with Christ, to become more holy, pious, and godly. Indeed there are many who wish to have Christ only *for* them, not *in* them; He is to be only a covering for them, but by no means an example. True believers, on the other hand, have a longing of an entirely different kind: they do not seek and wish sanctification only for the life beyond, but also before that, sanctification in this life, being well aware that altho this has no merit contributing to salvation, yet without holiness no one shall see God. The true believers have a proper hunger and thirst after righteousness (Matt. 5:6). Not only and first and foremost the righteousness of faith by grace alone, or Christ Himself, who is given us of God unto righteousness, but furthermore the imperfect, yet absolutely required righteousness of life. They have a sincere intention, a heartfelt love, a fervent desire and longing to follow the ways of God's commandments; and tho they may wish, like Paul, to go hence and be with Christ, they do so mainly in order to get rid of the body of sin and to be more pleasing to God. Such souls are well aware that when God delivers us out of the hands of our enemies, we are delivered in order that we may serve Him in holiness and righteousness all our days (Luke 1:74, 75).

Such souls bear in mind that when Jesus gives Himself for us He does so that He may redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works (Tit. 2:14). In short, the aim of our longing must be, first, to attain the righteousness of faith thru Christ; and secondly, of necessity the righteousness of life as far as possible in this world; and whoever has not this double aim in his longing is no believer but a hypocrite.

So far we have discussed the subject and the aim of the faithful longing. Now comes the third point: a consideration of its kind and nature, and this consists of two things, namely, heartfelt earnestness and constancy.

Heartfelt, earnest, and right eager must this longing be for God's grace in Christ Jesus, not cool or drowsy; otherwise it does not by any means correspond to the misery from which a person wishes to be saved, nor to the dignity of the Redeemer with whom he craves to be united. From both of these it follows that a genuine longing goes so far, at any rate, that a person yearns with greater earnestness for the fellowship of Jesus than for anything else in the whole world. Then one may say with Asaph: Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever (Ps. 73:25, 26). And with Paul he will count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, count them but refuse that he may gain Christ (Phil. 3:8). Like that merchant (Matt. 13:

45) he will not even hesitate to sell all that he has, that is, renounce it, in order that he may buy the pearl of great price. It is true, indeed, that in our infirmity we can never find that our longing is in proportion to the object sought, and the more we learn to know the loveliness of Jesus, the less are we pleased with our longing, and find that by right it ought to be much more intense and fervent; and when we feel how imperfect and defective this longing is, we can find no better consolation than our own dissatisfaction with such longing; for this very dissatisfaction testifies to our sincerity. But no matter how feeble this longing for Jesus may be, it must at any rate be stronger than any longing for things of this earth. So eagerly must we yearn for Him as a man deeply buried in debt yearns for a bail, as one who is hungry for a piece of bread, as a sick person for the physician, as a shipwrecked person for one to rescue him, as one sentenced to death for pardon. Therefore, if our longing has put some aim above Jesus and covets some earthly object so eagerly that we, in order to attain to this, venture to go beyond Jesus and His love, then there is certainly something wrong with our faith, and the confident longing is by no means right. The lazy and drowsy person may wish to become rich, but he does not go beyond his wish, for he does not care to raise his hands from his lap and make an effort. A hypocritical Christian may have a sort of wish and longing to possess Jesus and be saved, but he wants to get these sublime things at a low cost, without an effort, without renouncing temporal benefits, without interrupting his sinful lusts and all vanity. Thereby he shows

how sluggish his longing is, not even as live as the longing of a hungry beggar for a piece of bread, even tho men must enter violently into the kingdom of heaven and take it by force.

Furthermore, constancy is the attribute by which the true, faithful longing may be distinguished from a false longing. Even the hypocrite may occasionally experience a fleeting devotion, as in the case of Herod when he would have listened to the preaching of John, or like the Pharisee who said: Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God (Luke 14:15). When such a person considers what a fine thing it is that he, without regard to the merits of any of his own works, can be saved thru Christ alone, he is apt to sigh and wish that in common with all believers of God he also may have a share in the bliss of heaven. But this is only the preliminary, the awakening and urging grace of God, which, as the theologians put it, works *upon* the heart but not *in* the heart; and since this grace is not accepted and admitted by the self-confident sinners who only in their own imaginations have been born again, their longing soon passes away and they change their minds as soon as the wind turns. If they afterwards come to sinful entertainments and parties it is all gone; the little spark has fled; their heart has grown cold, and it is very far from being melted and transformed. Such people are seized with a longing for what is good in the same manner as pious people may at times feel a hankering for what is bad, that is, rarely, on peculiar occasions, or incidentally; or as a woman who is pregnant may suddenly experience a craving for a dish of food

which she never relished either before or since. But such is not the nature of the longing of true believers. This is constant, and tho it may not be equally fervent at all times, it is always sincere. For tho the eager soul at times finds a powerful consolation and reflection of God's goodness and, accordingly, in a certain way passes from yearning to possession, so that, like the grief-stricken bride searching for her bridegroom, it may rejoice in this manner: It was but a little that I passed from them, when I found Him whom my soul loveth (Cant. 3:4), such experiences are not apt to last long: the believer again finds that his Jesus disappears, not from his heart but from his mind's eye, and thus the longing returns and may become even more intense than before, all such glimpses of grace and awakening of love being only crumbs from the Lord's table which are not intended for satiation but for encouraging further longing. Such a constant longing was found in King David, who says: My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto Thine ordinances at all times (Ps. 119:20). Paul speaks to the same effect when he says: Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may lay hold on that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:12).

Now, this pursuit, this longing, this sighing and craving in a Christian is not equally ardent and intense at all times during his life; but as the use of the means of grace is more diligent or more sluggish, it is stronger or weaker, just as the circulation of the blood in the body does not entirely stop as long as the natural life of a person lasts, but some-

times flows more slowly, sometimes more rapidly. Similarly, this longing is a sort of spiritual pulse: it always beats, but it does not always hurry, nor are the beats always uniform in the inner man. In short: it is subject to change, but there is no complete stop or perdition. These are the two attributes by which the true longing and yearning must be known, and from this we may conclude what is lacking in those of whom Christ speaks so seriously. Many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in (the kingdom of heaven), and shall not be able (Luke 13:24). Why? Because there is a lack of ardent earnestness, they do not continually and unceasingly crave and long and yearn and reach out for the goal in view, they do not violently seize upon the kingdom of heaven; but when they are close to the gate of heaven, when they should make the first real start in prayer and watchfulness, they sit down and, like the five foolish virgins, go to sleep.

3. Now we have seen the true, faithful longing in its origin, aim, and nature. Whoever is truly in possession of this may take comfort in being one of the poor in spirit, the hungry and thirsty of whom Jesus said that they shall be filled. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled (Matt. 5:6). Such hungry ones the Lord hath filled with good things (Luke 1:53). I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely (Rev. 21:6).

The reason why Holy Writ compares the longing of faith with hunger and thirst is this: As hunger and thirst are the strongest natural impulses, making a hungry person willing to give up every-

thing else that he has in order to get food and drink, so is this longing and yearning for the grace of God in Christ the main driving wheel in the innermost propensities of the will. And as hunger follows when the stomach is emptied, and is made more keen by the sight and smell of food, so also the faithful longing arises, and a person is spiritually hungry and needy when he can perceive no righteousness in himself but only misery; when such a soul, steeped in distress and stript of every notion of self-righteousness, sees Jesus, the bread of life, coming forth, and hears some powerful word of consolation that reaches the heart, then its hungry life shows its need by longing and sighing and yearning, begging and moaning, as it were: O Lord Jesus, how sweet is Thy Word, how consoling is Thy fellowship! Oh, that I might have Thee and be intimately united with Thee: Then I shall wish for nothing else in the world, then I shall be willing to suffer anything for Thy sake! But where art Thou, my Jesus, I do not feel Thy power as I would like to do; I am still so feeble and frail. Oh, I only fear that I may still be far from Thee! O Lord Jesus, help me, strengthen me! Refresh me! Oh, that Thy merciful eye would look upon me! Give me a crumb of bread from Thy table! Now, Lord, I shall not let Thee go until Thou blessest me. Nothing has the right savor to me as long as I am not perfectly sure of Thy grace. O wretched world, what hast thou? What canst thou give me? Nothing, nothing, Jesus alone is my all. He has the noble peace which the world cannot give. Give me, oh,

give me, most lovable, most friendly Jesus, what gives me bliss in time and eternity!

An expression of such an intense, fervent longing of a believing soul for Christ is found in the following hymn, which is sung in our churches:

*Jesus, the very thought is sweet;
In that dear name all heart-joys meet;
But oh, than honey sweeter far,
The glimpses of His presence are.*

Also:

*How rich and soothing is that love
Which floods the soul from God above!
My inmost being magnifies
The Savior's love that never dies.
O come, O come, my heavenly King,
Thou canst but joy and comfort bring.
Oh, let me nestle at Thy breast,
And I shall be forever blest.*

4. Of such a fervent and hungry longing for God in the believer's soul we find many glorious testimonies in Holy Writ, especially: Lord, all my desire is before Thee; and my groaning is not hid from Thee (Psalm 38:9). O God, Thou art my God; earnestly will I seek Thee: my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee, in a dry and weary land, where no water is (Ps. 63:1). My soul fainteth for Thy salvation; but I hope in Thy Word. Mine eyes fail for Thy Word, while I say, When wilt Thou comfort me (Ps. 119:81)? I spread

forth my hands unto Thee: my soul thirsteth after Thee, as a weary land (Ps. 143:6). In the way of Thy judgments, O Jehovah, have we waited for Thee; to Thy name, even to Thy memorial name, is the desire of our soul. With my soul I have desired Thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee earnestly (Is. 26:8, 9). Thru the same prophet the Lord Himself speaks thus: The poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst; I, Jehovah, will answer them (41:17). All those who have a feeble faith or who as yet are only longing, having been unable to force their way to the desired embrace, may get great consolation from these last words, and also from these: Jehovah, Thou hast heard the desire of the meek: Thou wilt prepare their heart, Thou wilt cause Thine ear to hear (Ps. 10:17); further, from the sweet, encouraging words of Jesus: Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matt. 11:28); and: Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out (John 6:37);—likewise also from Acts: It shall be, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved (2:21).

Such spiritually poor, hungry, and empty souls indeed have a feeble faith, for they have not advanced from longing to a joyous embrace, and have not so distinctly tasted and felt the consolation nor so decisively perceived the sweet presence of their Jesus as they wished, and God has laid hold on them more than they have perceptibly laid hold on Him. Nevertheless they have a true and saving faith, and with this grace they should be content! For they

may be sure that, like Mary at the grave, they are much closer to their Jesus than they themselves are aware of. I intend to discuss this matter more thoroly elsewhere in this treatise; but before doing so I shall quote, for the consolation of souls having a feeble faith, some testimonials from teachers of high standing in our Church. Dr. Danhauer says in his so-called *Catechismus Milch*: If you can feel and perceive faith (that is, make your way in devotion so far that Jesus consolingly embraces you, as you Him), then thank God; if not, be content with your longing, and with the struggle between the flesh and the Spirit (9, p. 257). Dr. Johann Staupitz says in his booklet, *Vom Glauben*: It is not far between believing and ardently wishing to believe. . . . One that has a feeble faith gets consolation from his faith, gets consolation from the ardent yearning of his faith, which also is known to God alone. Believe on Christ or, at any rate, persist unyieldingly in wishing to believe, and do not doubt any more, for you are blessed in Him (C. 2). Johann Arndt speaks of the same matter here and there in his book called, *Of True Christianity*. Particularly to the point is this (Vol. II, Ch. 41): God judges the craving of the believers to the effect that the longing of no meek heart shall ever be in vain. . . . Therefore, as great as you wish your faith to be in the sight of God, even so great is it in His sight. He delivered me, because He delighted in me (Ps. 18:19). And at another place: All souls that long for God and eagerly wish to come to God and eagerly wish to believe as strongly and boldly as God demands, they come to God and Christ, there-

fore God will not cast them out (John 6:37). Martin Chemnitz speaks thus: If faith makes no mistake in its aim and in what it seeks, but lays hold on Christ, tho with a feeble confidence, or only seeks and attempts to lay hold on Him (vel saltem conatur et expedit apprehendere), it is a true and justifying faith (Loc. Th. L. de Justificatione). Of human testimonies I wished to save the best to the last. On this matter our dear Luther speaks thus: It is the nature of faith to feel sin and be anxious to get rid of it. If you feel the timidity and feebleness of your heart and would be glad to have faith, then thank God; for it is a sure sign that the Word has struck and stirred you, that it trains you and presses and drives you (Tom. Jen. 3, 162). What sort of faith would it be if I went and found no emotion or worry in the heart, by which, however, faith ought to be trained (Tom. 5, Wittenb. 324)? And again: When a right penitent heart (like that of the king of Nineveh) speaks as tho it doubted, it shows that it has not yet passed thru all affliction and hindrances which Satan throws in the way of faith, but is still fettered in distress and labor: therefore, such words are rather tokens that faith is there, but a faith that is fearing and battling and has for its aim the grace of God.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONTENTS

1. Misconception of many people concerning doubt and assurance as to their justification.
2. Composed of truth and falsehood.
3. Kind of doubt that is damnable.
4. Kind that is not.
5. Highly needful for soul-physicians to heed this distinction.
6. Additional proof that not all doubt is damnable.

1. It has astonished me to observe that people look upon faith especially as a decidedly strong assurance of the forgiveness of their sins thru Christ, which must necessarily cause great joy and pleasure in the soul. From this it follows that those who have not been able to attain to any such entirely firm assurance of being reconciled to God, but find in themselves only an imploring confidence, a wholly sad and feeble confidence, or more longing for grace than assurance of grace, and, consequently, perceive no real peace of soul and sweet consolation—such people, I say, are led by this wrong notion still more deeply into useless doubt, and it may even happen that after a while they turn completely around, becoming sick and tired of the exercise of godliness. On the other hand there are many carnal and unregenerate persons who drop into the habit of dreaming of assurance of the grace of God in the

midst of their sins and thus never attain to a true penitence, supposing that the calm and confident state of their heart, which really amounts to nothing but a carnal security, is sufficient proof of the forgiveness of their sins.

2. The whole ground upon which this false system is founded may be briefly defined as follows: When a person stedfastly believes and trusts that his sins are forgiven him and that he will surely be saved thru the death of Christ, for this very reason it is taken for granted that such a person will be saved. And, contrariwise, whosoever has the least doubt as to the forgiveness of his sins and his salvation shall for that very reason be condemned. Therefore, nothing can be more dangerous than doubt, and nothing more necessary than certainty.—I do not know what may have given rise to this false notion, but I do know for sure that this is the view held by the common people among us, at any rate. But the absurdities occasioned by this view are sufficient proof that it is not correct, not in all its parts, at any rate. It is really half true and half false. In other words, the spirit of lies has gilded his vicious and venomous darts with a lustre of truth which makes them far more dangerous and acceptable than they would be if their falsity and viciousness struck everybody's eye at once, for in that case no one would be deceived.

I therefore repeat it very deliberately as to the above mentioned notion, which so many people hold with regard to doubt and confidence, that it is half true and half false, which in one way tends to strengthen carnal security, in another way to pre-

vent true confidence and peace of soul. First, it is true that it is impossible to obtain the mercy of God and the forgiveness of sins where there is absolutely no confidence to receive them. But it is untrue that this confidence must needs be equally great in all persons, that it also must bring great assurance, peace of soul, and heartfelt consolation. It is enough when it is so great that it works directly, tho not reflectively—I mean, when it flees to Christ, stretches forth its needy hand, tho it shakes and trembles and is afflicted by doubting thoughts. Reason: It is not required that a person find refuge in Christ with decided boldness, but only a refuge pure and simple; and tho this boldness is desirable as something glorious in this case, it is, after all, only something additional that may be either absent or present without mending or marring the thing itself. See Mark 9:24 and Luke 8:24. A remarkable passage on this subject is found in Isaiah. Therefore, thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone of sure foundation: he that believeth shall not be in haste (28:16). Christ is the corner-stone; whoever has so much confidence that he, at any rate, does not (as Luther has translated it) fly away from it, does not make haste, but keeps his ground, he shall be considered as a believer.

Secondly, it is true that finding refuge in Christ brings in its wake, sooner or later, according to the will of God, an absolute assurance of the forgiveness of sins and also a sweet delight, an indescribable pleasure, peace, and joy. But it is not true that they should come close upon each other to all per-

sons; on the contrary, they are often separated by a considerable length of time.

Thirdly, it is true that doubt, which is the very opposite of faith, is dangerous and may throw a person into perdition. But what kind of doubt? There are two kinds of doubt, which by no manner of means must be confounded, as has been done by many in the past.

3. One kind of doubt consists in this: The sinner does not give full assent to God's promises of grace, but doubts whether it is true, whether it is reliable or not that God for Christ's sake will be merciful to all men, and thus he cannot quite make up his mind, hesitating and wavering in his heart, not knowing where to turn for salvation. This kind of doubt is referred to in James 1:6: He that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. A double-minded person, who seems to have a double soul and a double heart (Ps. 12:3) and as such is hated of God, is fickle in all his ways. As an example of this kind may be mentioned the disbelieving king of Israel who sent his messenger to say to the prophet Elisha: Behold, this evil is of Jehovah; why should I wait for Jehovah any longer (2 Kings 6:33)? This kind of doubt stands squarely in the way of believing confidence; according to the words of John, it makes God a liar. Therefore it is extremely dangerous. Indeed I am afraid that few are saved from it, but that their faith will be shipwrecked when they once for all have proceeded far enough to throw an evil thought or a suspicion upon our dear God, as tho His promises were not to be depended upon. And I confess that it is al-

together beyond my understanding how those who believe that God by an absolute decree has decided that only a few persons shall be saved, can brush this doubt aside, for it follows incontrovertibly from their principles and is a great detriment to the trusting confidence, no matter how you explain their view.

4. But an entirely different kind of doubt is that which is found in those having a feeble faith and which hinders their confidence to the extent that it becomes sad and plaintive, and cannot force its way to a perfect boldness, but which, however, cannot quite overcome their confidence and suppress it. This doubt deserves rather to be called a fear, a timidity, and it amounts to this: that a sinner who is truly penitent, who truly hungers after righteousness, and truly assents to God's promises of grace in Christ still has some doubt as to the forgiveness of his sins and is not quite sure of his salvation, but nevertheless cleaves unto God and does not at all question whether he can and shall depend upon Him or not. An instance of this kind we find in Jonah, the king of Nineveh expressing himself thus: Who knoweth whether God will not turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger (3:9)? Another instance we find in Luke, the disciples crying, Master, we perish (8:24). See also Acts 8:22. The kind of doubt last mentioned is by no means condemnable; for the object of faith, namely, God's grace in Christ, remains unimpaired, and when the penitent doubts he does not distrust God, but he distrusts himself and the sincerity of his own conversion. In his profound spiritual humility and sense of sin he is afraid that so far he may have failed to

submit to the proper rule of salvation. If he were sure of the latter, nothing would be lacking. See Rom. 14:20.

It may be argued that faith and doubt are contraries. This is true. But who will say that this is a reason why they cannot co-exist in the same person? Both cannot be uppermost at the same time, but they may be together in such a way that doubt and unbelief are in subjection. Was not this the case with the father of the epileptic boy when he said: I believe; help Thou mine unbelief (Mark 9:24)? We all know that the Spirit and the flesh, the two fountains and sources of belief and unbelief, are together in the body of this death, and are at war with each other. To make it still more plain: Belief and unbelief can be together in one soul and one subject as long as they have not one object, one aim; for if they have, I must admit that it is not possible. But there are two objects in a person of feeble faith: the aim or object of his belief is Christ, which he clings to; on the contrary, the object of his unbelief is his salvation and assurance of the forgiveness of his sins, which he doubts. Why? Not on account of any defect or inefficiency in the merits of Christ, for he has no doubt at all on that score; but on account of a most profound humility and uncertainty as to whether he has strictly followed the rules of conversion and has done all that he could on his part to cleanse his heart from sin. By no means do I deny that this doubt is a sin and a weakness, and therefore cannot be commended, by me, at any rate, who am making extreme efforts to teach, not the Papistical doubt and uncertainty, but

the true faith and confidence. But for the consolation of all those who have a feeble faith and are afflicted I can say in truth that even the kind of doubt last mentioned is a sure token of the presence of the true faith, just as sickness itself testifies that the patient is still living. Whoever worries by doubting his salvation at a time when he otherwise has good intentions and loves God from the depth of his heart is surely pious, tho he misuses his piety and turns it into anxiety. No matter what the circumstances may be, this is a token of faith, and all that can be concluded from such doubt is, as John says, that love is not yet perfect; for perfect love casteth out fear.

5. Therefore I find that we invite constant danger by declaring that a firm assurance of salvation is, at any rate, a leading characteristic if not the justifying and saving quality of faith. Such a statement shuts the gate of heaven in the face of all those who on account of the feebleness of their faith have not yet attained to such assurance or have lost it thru afflictions. For whoever has not the justifying quality of faith cannot have justification itself either. This has led many into the deepest despair; and I would like to know how a shepherd of souls who holds the above view would soothe and comfort an anxious heart without overthrowing these personal theories which he himself has made out beforehand. From certain quarters I have become aware of a remarkable instance. A prominent person in our dear Denmark was reduced to great bodily as well as mental weakness. The heart was full of doubt and worry. The person in question wished to know the

basis for his hope of salvation, but this very thing only aroused and increased the doubt. Dr. L. advised this soul to search for the consciousness and boldness of faith, for the direct testimony of the Holy Spirit. But the soul became still more terrified and cried out in great anguish: Oh, that is not in me, I cannot find it, I know it only from what others have told me. The person almost lost his life in this anguish. But when Dr. M. called on this person he chose a different method, explaining that doubt about salvation is not always to be condemned, and advising the person to seek consolation not in his own feelings, not in his own boldness and assurance, but in the sincerity of his faith, in his spiritual hunger and thirst, in his love for God, no matter how feeble, in his desire for God's Word, and his earnest intention to follow it and walk in the ways of God.

6. And so it is indeed: How many a child of God must cry as David: I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Thine eyes: nevertheless Thou heardest the voice of my supplication when I cried unto Thee (Ps. 31:22). Then it becomes true indeed that if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things (1 John 3:20). The believers are often afflicted to the extent that they must say: We are perplexed, yet not unto despair (2 Cor. 4:8). Thus, when our doubt or unbelief does not quite overwhelm and suppress our faith, this thought is to the point: Our lack of faith shall not make God's faithfulness null and void (See Rom. 3:3). That there is such a thing as doubt that does not nullify faith may be seen quite

clearly from the Savior's words to Peter: O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt (Matt. 14:31)? Here Christ calls him a person of little faith, but He does not call him an unbeliever as long as doubt does not prevail in him.

Many arguments might be quoted from our church teachers, but I shall mention only some of the most remarkable. Chrysostom says: It is possible that one may believe while he doubts (Ad. Ebr. 10:22). Luther introduces a believing soul which speaks as follows in its struggle against doubt: O that it were true! O that one could believe it! If I only knew how to believe that God in heaven is merciful to me, how profoundly happy I should be, and willing to do or suffer anything whatever (Ev. Matt. 5 Sermo.) A similar testimony by Luther, in which he refers to the king of Nineveh, was quoted in chapter seven of this treatise. Scriver says (This is improper talk): I cannot believe that I am a child of God, therefore I am not either. Such stuff and more of the same nature does not go together as cause and effect—any more than the following: The tree does not get green or blossom in winter, therefore it has no sap either (The Treasury of the Soul).

Müller says in his *Goettliche Liebes-Flamme*: It does no harm that your faith worries and trembles if you only struggle against your weakness and do not permit your faith to succumb entirely (P. 1, C. 10). Martin Hoeier says: Tho doubt struggles against faith, in this struggle doubt does not overcome or conquer faith. Therefore, this faith, tho feeble and small, must not be confounded with the

dead faith (Disput. de Explicat. Fid. ex 2 Cor. 13: 5, 26). Jean Taffin says in his *Marques des Enfans de Dieu*: We must also understand that the faith of the true children of God can be sincere tho they notice doubt, fear, and suspicion in themselves. For such frailties give them no pleasure, that they should maintain them, but it grieves them. And thus there is in them a faith which is afflicted by doubt. This doubt, suspicion, and unbelief are the fiery darts which Satan throws at our faith. But according to Paul, faith is the shield that quenches these darts and checks them so that they do not enter the heart (C. 3). La Placette, *Traite de la Conscience*: It is not impossible that a person may be reconciled to God without knowing it, or he may even doubt it. This often happens to the believers (P. 196). Thom. Godwin, *Child of the Light*: It may happen that a pious soul is in doubt about the grace of God and does not know what God intends to do with it, whether He will carry it to heaven or throw it into hell (C. 11). Thus Asaph asks: Is His loving-kindness clean gone for ever (Ps. 77: 8, etc.)?

CHAPTER NINE

CONTENTS

1. An ungodly person has a reason to doubt.
2. But a pious Christian has not.
3. The refuge of the believer in Christ and the confident acceptance of His merits briefly repeated.

1. What I quoted in chapter eight for the consolation of those who in truth are penitent but also feeble and afflicted, must be carefully heeded by carnal and hitherto wholly unconverted persons, lest they falsely apply and take it to themselves. Behold the difference: An unconverted person may at times doubt his salvation, and there is cause for his doubt. No one ought to attempt to deprive him of this doubt, for it is reasonable and well founded. If such a person doubts, in all fairness he ought to doubt; but if he believes, his is only an imaginary belief; if he hopes to be saved in all his unrighteousness, it is only a false security and a devilish delusion. If some one says: I doubt the sincerity of my faith, for I have no real hatred against sin, no hunger and thirst after righteousness; then I say, You have a reason to doubt. If one says: I doubt whether I have apprehended Jesus and am united with Him, for generally my will and deeds are wholly foreign to His nature, and I do not permit myself to be moved by His Spirit, but most of the time by my own ungovernable propensities, then I

answer: Well may you doubt, and I also doubt whether the tree is good, since its fruits are of no use. But why should there be any doubt? Paul removes all doubt when he says: The works of the flesh are manifest, etc.—of which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they who practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21). Likewise: Some men's sins are evident, going before unto judgment (1 Tim. 5:24). But if you, unconverted sinner, in your present condition have a reason for being without hope of salvation, this reason may, nevertheless, be rendered null and void if you are truly converted and train yourself in the living, acting faith; for if the wicked turn from all his sins that he hath committed. . . . he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his transgressions that he hath committed shall be remembered against him (Ez. 18:21, 22). So far about the doubt of the impenitent.

2. A person having a feeble faith is daily engaged in seeking his God, with his heart he goes out of the world and its sinful lusts, reaching out only for heaven and hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and the love of his Savior Jesus Christ constantly leads him forward on the way of salvation. Being led by the Spirit in this manner, he has every reason to be sure of grace and sonship and to be quite satisfied; but from holy and wise and lofty motives God permits His child to be carried into doubt, or rather into worry and anguish as to the certainty of his heavenly heritage, because he thinks that he has not advanced far enough in holiness, and especially because he thinks the goal and

aim of his faith, namely, Christ and His righteousness, has not been so perceptibly and tangibly apprehended and embraced by him, nor has he felt the testimony of the Holy Spirit so powerfully and distinctly expressed in his heart as he wishes and expects according to books and the examples of other pious Christians. This doubt is found in many a true believer, and efforts are made to deprive him of this by means of the above mentioned evidence, namely, that man is saved not by the reflecting faith, nor by perceiving the bold, consolingly ascertained faith, but by the simple, direct faith which, tho in great feebleness, clings like a child to Jesus and is sustained by Him—not by boldly finding refuge at the mercy seat, but by the very refuge itself, no matter how it may be, provided it is heartfelt, sincere, and combined with aversion to the sins which he has turned his back upon, and with an earnest longing for Christ as the object of his faith.

3. This longing of the soul, which reaches out for Christ, is in all truth the justifying *actio fidei directa*, or the motion of the believer, which aims straight out, strives after Christ and goes to rest thru Him. This is to look unto the serpent of brass, to look unto the Author and Perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12:2). It is the confiding supplication of which it is said: Whosoever shall call the name of the Lord shall be saved (Acts 2:21). It is the direct, faithful going to Jesus, of which He Himself says: Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. Also: Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matt. 11:28): And the following words are the plainest

of all: I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst (John 6:35). Those of you who wish to have a brief definition of faith should pay close attention to this passage. As you will notice, it is clearly expressed that to believe and to come have one and the same meaning: He that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. The latter explains the former.

Therefore, whoever comes to Jesus with a really penitent soul, hungry and stript of all sham righteousness of his own, and filled with an earnest intention to seek holiness, or filled with longing for Him, seeking all his salvation in Jesus and also subjecting himself in all obedience to the holy will of Jesus—such a person must not doubt that he has the saving faith which not only the Savior, in the passages quoted above, but also the apostle Paul calls an access or approach, a leading towards God (Rom. 5:2; Eph. 2:18; 3:12). In this case there can be no leader or moving force but the Holy Spirit, who leads us in all truth, and as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God (Rom. 8:14). This Holy Spirit, who on the day of Pentecost came upon the apostles in a mighty wind and by Christ is compared to the wind (John 3:8), gives Himself to the soul thru the Word, spreads and extends the full sails of devotion, craving and longing, and thus drives the soul in a direct course and with full speed, as it were, to its goal and aim, which is Christ. But this kind-hearted Savior now testifies expressly that He will not cast out a soul that comes to Him, tho it come to Him with trembling knees and slow steps,

in great feebleness and doubt, or even struggling and battling against unbelief itself (Matt. 8:26; 14:31; 17:20; Mark 9:24), when it seizes upon Him as its anchor in distress and its horn of salvation, or in devout meditation apprehends Him as He hung on the cross and strives to press Him to its heart.

Moreover, this apprehending, which is quite closely and intimately united with the coming of faith, does not depend upon the weakness or the strength of faith; hence it is not strictly required of all that they, like Simeon, shall come with Jesus in their arms or walk about with Him rejoicing or, like Thomas, put their fingers into the print of the nails in His hands; but it is sufficient unto salvation that they, like the woman who had an issue of blood, can force their way thru the multitude of vain, earthly thoughts and come so close to the Lord Jesus that they touch the border of His garment. This garment is His perfect righteousness, which we touch, yes, even wrap around ourselves, when our soul constantly seeks Him, saying: I know that Christ has died for my sins and risen for my justification, and singing:

*My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
No merit in myself I claim,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.*

End of First Part

SECOND PART

CHAPTER ONE

CONTENTS .

1. Over against the direct faith is put the so called reflex faith.
2. Reflex faith is of two kinds: active, or rational; passive, or supernatural.
3. The reflex passive faith is to be looked upon as the witness of the Spirit with our spirit.
4. This witness is, strictly speaking, of two kinds: one is indirect, by its urging and prompting toward what is good; the other is direct, by its exceeding inward consolation, joy, assurance, and perception of faith.
5. The direct witness is the one that receives particular attention here. It is said to be reflex, passive, and supernatural, and very little has been written about it.
6. Thus we shall have four things to discuss.

1. Now that the previous chapter has been devoted to a fairly comprehensive discussion of the function of faith which directly aims at Christ, seeks Him and deals with Him, and has also shown that unto justification and salvation nothing is more needful than this; the arrangement and the previous division of the subject matter now lead us further to the faith which is turned back and knows and perceives itself in divine light and joy. For it is one thing to believe, another to know, feel, and be sure that we believe. The latter is not necessary unto righteousness and salvation, but indeed unto rest and assurance for a troubled heart, for whose

particular consolation and enlightenment I am discussing this subject.

2. A close study of this matter seems to me to show that this reflexio, or the knowing and perceiving of a firm faith, is of two kinds. First, a rational reflection by which a believer tests himself whether he is in the faith, searches and questions himself according to the Word of God, and when he finds in himself the essential elements of faith: knowledge, assent, and confidence, and particularly the fruits of faith: love, obedience, etc., then he arrives at the correct conclusion: You have faith, you are a believer. We may call this a rest in faith which is active and is based on a rational conclusion.

The second kind of reflection is more receptive and supernatural, far above all powers of nature and reason. Here the believer contributes absolutely nothing, but receives and experiences the powerful impression of the Holy Spirit, which in some incomprehensible manner places in him the pledge of the heavenly heritage, gives him in the depth of his heart an exceedingly sweet and consoling assurance of his state of grace, and also in this manner testifies powerfully with the spirit of the believer himself that he is a child of God.*

* Besides these two kinds of rest in faith, there is a third, namely, one that is composite. For the sake of clearness the first two kinds may and ought to be distinguished; but as a matter of fact the heavenly rest in faith usually passes into the composite rest. There are two reasons for this: first, because all reflections are shut out at the very moment of the heavenly sensation; for evidently the soul must be conscious of this heavenly sensation, and this consciousness can neither arise nor be maintained entirely without any use of the understanding, except in a veritable ecstasy; secondly, the rest in faith based on rational reflection follows immediately upon the heavenly rest or takes its place, the person coming to the conclusion that he is in the state of grace.

The former reflection may be found in any believer whenever he chooses to subject himself to a serious self-examination, unless he is still a child whose mental and sensory powers are as yet untrained, or it takes place in a moment of affliction which makes him suffer from sadness and melancholia and thus for a time deprives him of this consolation. This active reflection, I say, can be made at any time by any believer, and the assurance resulting therefrom may be had; for this is nothing but the general examination recommended by Paul (2 Cor. 13:5). But the latter reflection, which the Holy Spirit bestows as a peculiar and particular grace, which is wholly supernatural and to which man contributes nothing, but simply permits himself to be treated—this reflection is not general, nor is it meted out in an equally perceptible degree to all believers, so that they might obtain consolation therefrom.

3. In order to show forth from Holy Writ both the foundation and the nature of this important matter, which until this day have not been sufficiently elucidated, we shall meditate somewhat on the very emphatic words of Paul: The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God (Rom. 8:16). Behold, here are two different witnesses and, of course, two different testimonies to confirm one truth, namely, that we are children of God. First our spirit testifies, and this is active and rational reflection when the understanding, sanctified by regeneration, makes an estimate of the heart and, if it finds that the heart conforms to and agrees with the evangelical will of God, it concludes

that the heart believes. Without controversy, this is a testimony from ourselves, and this is what John means when He says: If our heart condemn us not, we have boldness toward God (I John 3:21).

Now, in addition to the testimony of our own spirit, we have, according to Paul, the testimony of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit. How does this come to pass? St. Ambrose and Anselm state that this testimony occurs in us when we follow in the steps of Jesus Christ in order to conform to His image in the greatest holiness attainable. Origen holds that such testimony is granted to our souls when it is no longer the fear of hell but a pure love of the good God that impels us to obey His commandments. Chrysostom thinks that such a testimony consists of a vivid realization of spiritual pleasure in the Holy Spirit and confident boldness in prayer. This definition by Chrysostom differs from both of the former ones, but all of them are quite correct. In order to understand this clearly it must be observed that the Holy Spirit bears witness to our sonship in two ways: first, indirectly and mediately, by a holy urging and impelling towards what is good, as pointed out by Ambrose, Anselm, and Origen; but, secondly, He also testifies directly and manifestly, by a heart-felt, intensely sweet consolation and a perceptible assurance, and this is Chrysostom's view. Now, let us consider both of these testimonies of the Holy Spirit separately.

4. Whatever the Holy Spirit works in us by His ordinary and extraordinary grace and by which we may surely know His presence and merciful in-

dwelling, must be considered as an indirect, mediate, and informal testimony. That there is fire in the house is testified to by the smoke rising to the outside. That there is an invisible soul in the body is testified to by its movements. In the same manner the urging and leading of the Holy Spirit is a testimony showing who are children of God (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:18). That a person doeth righteousness (1 John 3:10), that he antagonizes evil, that the Spirit and the flesh are battling against each other (Gal. 5:17), that there is longing and craving and hunger and thirst after righteousness (Matt. 5:6), that people pray with heartfelt, childlike confidence (Rom. 8:15)—all this I call an indirect testimony of the Spirit, which in the true believer is neither so incomprehensible nor so unusual that he, excepting in the hours of affliction, should be unable to come to a reasonable conclusion with regard to the matter and thus attain to a firm assurance. Therefore John says: He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself (1 John 5:10). And St. Augustine says that a person is perfectly conscious of his faith (L. XIII de Trin. C. I).

But now remains the direct, more formal, and more intimate witness of the Holy Spirit referred to by Chrysostom, when He does not act effectively,* that is, thru His works, to any great extent, but rather *personally* expresses the power of His pres-

* Even this direct witness may indeed be regarded as the work of the Holy Spirit, the word work being taken strictly and in its ordinary sense. But to show the difference in the matter itself it is looked upon differently in opposition to the indirect witness. On the other hand, the presence of the Holy Spirit is not to be excluded from the indirect witness.

ence more distinctly in a believing soul, impressing the power of the Gospel very deeply and perceptibly upon the heart by clear, definite statements (tho not in audible words), such as, Peace be with thee, Thy faith hath saved thee, Thy sins are forgiven; refreshing the heart with a drop of pure, heavenly delights, making it spiritually drunk, so to speak, and arousing in it such exceeding and glorious joy that a human being languishes from the effects of such heavenly delight and sweetness, becomes sick from love, and in his earthly estate he can not for any length of time endure such power and foretaste of heaven. Therefore the same also passes away at once, leaving only a consoling remembrance as a proof of the sonship of such a person.

5. The subject just discussed is what we, at this point in particular, wish to be understood as the wholly supernatural rest in faith. This matter is exceedingly important, touching the delicate center of the Gospel. But for the very reason of its delicacy and abstruseness, no thoro, detailed discussion of it can be found anywhere. By the grace of God and in fear and humility, I shall exert my limited powers in an endeavor to make known a little of this great mystery of godliness, leaving to others to complete the task.

6. In order to discuss the matter as orderly and plainly as possible, I shall make the following four questions on four main points: 1. Is there any such thing? 2. What is it, and what basis is there for it? 3. Is it experienced by all true believers, or only by some of them? 4. How is a person to behave in enjoying or lacking this sublime grace?

CHAPTER TWO

CONTENTS

1. Whether such a passive rest exists; for truth and falsehood often seem to stand very close together.
2. Are also confounded by some careless judges.
3. But unfairly and unjustly so.
4. Testimonies from some pious teachers who have proceeded much more cautiously in this matter.

1. The statement made by moralists to the effect that virtue is separated from vice only by an indivisible line, may justly be applied also to truth as the sister of virtue. There is at least one, and often two or more conflicting errors which are so close to it that it requires great cautiousness to avoid confounding them by taking away the boundary line between what is true and what is false.

This reminder may be of use in discussing the sublime and heavenly reflection of faith in some believing souls, especially because in our day there has appeared a heap of misunderstanding and controversy in connection with this matter.

We have seen people who boast of—I don't know what direct heavenly revelations—and others who have pretended an ecstatic rapture in which they have been a sort of engulfed by the Divine Essence, using neither feeling nor reason nor memory, but being stript of everything except what is God Himself. Of such wonderful things, which are too high

for me and which I do not know, I have nothing to write here; for it is not my intention to refute what has been called "enthusiastery," but rather to do my best to stake out a definite boundary line between this and the conviction of faith which is of a higher order.

2. I frankly confess that some theologians have acted in a Christian and wholesome manner when they, as watchmen on the walls of Zion, have not behaved like dumb dogs when it was time to cry out and refute the fanaticism and the fantastic notions which are so apt to creep in. Only this I have to lament in my simplicity, that the number of those is not small who in their zeal, partly from rashness, partly from poor judgment, have gone too far and have mixed up different things and thrown out the baby with the soapsuds, as the saying goes, having restricted the field too much on the basis of their own experience, having been too niggardly in meting out the highly varied workings of the Holy Spirit in the soul, thereby intending, in a certain way, to bind the hands of the dear God.

3. Among these there may be some who will not accept the wholly supernatural rest in faith mentioned above, simply because it seems to lead into the so-called mystical theology, and because some writers who have not without reason been objects of suspicion but who have been called mystics, tell about an inner light, an inner feeling, glory, and sweetness which, according to an external and incomplete description, seems to resemble this reflex faith, but really is as different from it as night from day, as falsehood from truth. In my opinion it is

a very dangerous thing to pronounce such a rash judgment on the highly varied and incomprehensible works of the Holy Spirit. The fact that Satan disguises himself and appears as an angel of light, is that any reason why God's legitimate gifts of grace should be suppressed? Some counterfeit coins are passed along with the genuine ones, but is that any reason why both should be rejected? Are we to doubt the genuineness of the luminaries in the sky because some one has seen will-'o-the-wisps? And tho Satan builds his chapel close up to the Church of God, does not the Church of God remain the same anyway? It is to be feared that many who in false zeal trot out their heedless judgments on things which are far too lofty for them, make the following words of Peter come true: They rail in matters whereof they are ignorant (2 Pet. 2:12).

4. Much more cautious and much better are the verdicts of two noted theologians of our church on this matter, and I shall quote their words briefly. Dr. Pritius says: Not everything that the mystical teachers tell about their experiences do I dare to brand as works of a deluded imagination, because I have experienced such things myself, and it is a matter which is beyond my powers. For I should have to fear that I might attribute to my own imagination or to the works of Satan what might hail from the Good Spirit; which judgment would indeed be a great sin and a most culpable blasphemy (Preface to I. G. Meuschen's *Postilla Mystica Evang.*). Spener says: There is a still higher degree (of divine works), most of which is uncommon and unusual, and hence we have only a little to say about it.

Whether any of you have tasted it, I do not know; but from my heart I wish that all of you had advanced that far, and farther than myself; for as to myself I must confess that God has not considered me worthy of such a high degree (which, to my knowledge, however, has been granted to many simple souls); for which I may easily be to blame myself. At any rate, I can not speak of it from my own experience (Lebens Pflichten, P. I, Fest. Nat. p. 296). Spener has more on the same subject (L. C.). Here belong also the words of the edifying English teacher, Emanuel Sonthom: You may answer: I know of no such people, therefore you cannot come to any definite conclusion in the matter. But to this I answer in all truth that to my great consolation I have spoken with not a few who have experienced the exceeding power of God's hand and His sweetness and goodness. But believe me, as I speak the truth as in the sight of the Lord Jesus, I have seen sinners, after their conversion, so suffused with consolation that no heart is strong enough to comprehend such things, and even those hearts that experienced it have not been able to keep quiet about it; for the dew of heavenly riches fell so abundantly upon them from God's gracious hand. And in order that it may not seem strange and new to you, it should be made known to you what is written about the *holy* Efrem, who after his conversion enjoyed such a wonderful consolation that he often cried to God: Lord, withdraw Thy hand a little, for my heart is too feeble to receive such exceeding great joy (Golden Treasure, P. M. 269). The words of these good men I cannot but

approve of, especially when Dr. Pritius writes: Not everything that the mystical teachers tell about their own experiences do I dare to brand as the work of a deluded imagination, for this matter is beyond my capacities. Surely the true and pure mystics will say nothing on this score which in any manner contradicts the Word of God, and which may not be found in other good and learned men of God who have not been stigmatized as near-mystics. I close this section by quoting the words which Dr. Lütke-mann uses in discussing this subject: I wish you would believe those who have experienced this (Foretaste of Divine Goodness). More that belongs here and confirms this position by references to Holy Writ and other religious books may be found in the next chapter under the second question.

CHAPTER THREE

CONTENTS

1. Very difficult to describe what the reflecting, sweet power of faith is.
2. Testimonies from Holy Writ pointing to this.
3. Allegories and parables from the same Holy Writ throwing all possible light on the matter.

1. Having thus in a few words meditated on the first question, namely, Does it really exist, and having previously pointed out that whatever may be false in the enthusiastic notions does not put to naught the true nature of the heavenly reflection. We are now facing the next question, What is it? In what does it consist? On what is it based? In all fairness, this question should not have been answered by me but by some one else who has experience on this score. For as to myself, no more than Pritius or Spener do I boast of any such high degree of the work and effect of grace, and on account of my manifold frailties I also feel that I am quite unworthy of the same. But this lack of experience on my part by no means makes me doubt the existence and actuality of the thing itself, for I find it grounded in the Word of God as well as in the writings of many highly enlightened teachers (tho sparingly and not in detail), so that I, like

Sonthom quoted above, may say: I have a great deal of what has been told by those who themselves have experienced it and of whom I think so highly that I cannot find the faintest reason for doubting their words.

I take it for granted beforehand that this matter, as an entirely inward and supernatural work of grace of the Holy Spirit, cannot be completely comprehended by the understanding, and still less expressed in words; for it is the pressed-down measure of divine peace, and therefore it is ineffable even to those who have themselves experienced it. I also take it for granted that this heavenly rest in faith is not always uniform, but is subject to manifold differences regarding its various degrees, to various parts and ingredients, to various subjects and believing hearts, and also to different times of occurrence. Now that this is previously stipulated, I shall draw on the Word of God, on the written testimonies of old and modern Church teachers, as well as on the experiences of highly favored children of God, and try my best to delineate and present this matter, which, by the way, is so full of mysteries.

2. The never-failing testimonies of Holy Writ on this matter we shall properly build on as our foundation. Now, by a close search very many such testimonies might be found; but those that occurred to me are the following:

The bride says: By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, but I found Him not It was but a little that I passed from them, when I found Him whom my soul loveth: I held Him, and would not let Him go (S. S. 3:1, 4).

Here we first see the loving soul in seeking, longing, praying, groaning, struggling.

Thereupon, when the pious-hearted Bridegroom sweetly permits Himself to be found and embraced, and He in turn embraces His bride, then comes the incomprehensible reflex rest. Then it is said: Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth; for Thy love is better than wine. Also: He brought me to the house of wine, and His banner over me was love. Stay ye me with cakes of raisins, refresh me with apples; for I am sick from love. His left hand is under my head, and His right hand doth embrace me (S. S. 1 and 2). Behold, to this sweet grace and love of God, which He pours into the believing soul, practically the whole of the Song of Solomon points, and therefore it remains a sealed book to philosophical, dry-as-dust Christians.*

They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house; and Thou wilt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures. For with Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light shall we see light (Ps. 36:8, 9).

The mouth of truth says: Your father Abraham rejoiced that he should see my day; and he saw it, and was glad (John 8:56). Note here: Abraham wished to see the Lord's day. This shows that even at that time he believed on Christ (the seeking, ordinary faith). But thereupon he passed from wish-

* To this class belong, in my opinion, those who wickedly scoff at the distinct testimony of the Holy Spirit in the heart as to the election to sonship—the same as what we call the heavenly rest in faith—or are brazen enough to accuse us of fanaticism. This has been done by A. Visovatus, an adherent of Socinus, in a book called *Religio Rationalis* (*Rational Religion*), p. 5; likewise by I. Clericus in his *Logic*, II, 10.

ing and longing to the restful joy in faith. He saw it, and this time it was seen to be much more clear and glorious than before, that is, by a reflection of faith, in a glorious and heavenly splendor of delight and in a very powerful witness of the Spirit. I can find no other satisfactory explanation of this remarkable passage, in which there is more than many are aware of. The churches were filled with the comfort of the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:31).—The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:52). In my opinion, both passages point to a very unusual joy and fulness of the Holy Spirit which is experienced by only a few of the Christians of our day. Be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18).—The love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts thru the Holy Spirit which was given unto us (Rom. 5:5). When we think of this heavenly outpouring as powerful and decidedly perceptible, then we have a definition of the heavenly rest in faith; for it is drops of the river of heavenly delights flowing down into the soul when it has sent its many groans to heaven.

It is God that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6). This tells us that God gave the apostles an extraordinary glimpse of grace for the strengthening of the faith in order that by this light they might be the more able to kindle the light of faith in the hearts of others, or that the rays that fell directly down upon them from God might be thrown back upon others by a kind of reflection. (Confer 2 Peter 1:19, which A. H. Francke

used for his sermon on The Foretaste of Eternal Life, Matt. 17, for 6th Sunday after Epiphany, and which may be applied very aptly in this connection.)

Paul says to souls that were already believing: Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:13).—(I pray) that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of His might (Eph. 1:17-19).—I bow my knees unto the Father that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, that ye may be strengthened with power thru His Spirit in the inward man that ye may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God (Eph. 3:14-19).—And this I pray, that your love (and, of course, their faith, as the root of love) may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment (Phil. 1:9).—To which end we also pray always for you, that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire of goodness and every work of faith (2 Thess. 1:11).—That the fellowship of thy faith may become effectual, in the knowledge of every good thing which is in you, unto Christ (Philemon

6).—It is self-evident that the wealth of blessings which in these passages is wished for those who already are believers and are righteous, must be something exceptionally great, glorious, and incomprehensible and must, for this reason, be the passive rest that we are discussing.

Heb. 6:4, 5 mentions a believer who has been enlightened, has tasted of the heavenly gift, has been a partaker of the Holy Spirit, has tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the age to come: (parenthetical explanation) has found a rich and sweet foretaste of the joy of eternal life in his heart. Now, since all grace is immediately denied to one who, after partaking in such grace, falls away from his baptismal covenant and, in spite of his conscience, indulges in wilful sins, we may be sure that the apostle by no means refers to an inferior and common, but to a sublime kind of enlightening, taste, feeling, etc., which is known only to a few persons. For otherwise we should have to conclude that the unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit, of which this must be an instance, were common, or even of daily occurrence among us, which God in His mercy forbid!

3. Next to these Bible passages we shall quote some Biblical parables and allegories, not exactly as evidence but rather as additional light on the subject; for I gladly admit that such pictures and images often work like clocks, which may be made to show any hour that you wish.

In 1 Kings 18 we read that the prophets of Baal competed with the prophet Elijah, and at the sacrifice Elijah made the agreement with them that the

God who answered by fire should be God (v. 24). The prophets of Baal made their meat-offering and cried to him from morning until noon, but there was no voice, and no one answered (v. 29). But when Elijah sacrificed and prayed fervently, behold, the fire of the Lord fell down and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust and licked up the water that was in the trench (v. 38).—This fire from heaven may be compared to the reflex power of faith, the Lord's flame of love, which falls from the sanctuary of God down upon the soul; and upon the altar of the heart, as a token that prayer and faith have been received with pleasure, and which in an incomprehensible manner kindles all the powers of the soul, so that they even seem to be consumed and melted in the heat of intense love.

When a glowing and smoking flax is held under a burning candle (the prophet Isaiah also compares our feeble faith with such flax), it pulls the flame down, or this falls down and kindles the flax, the candle thus giving a part of its flame to the flax. This resembles the love of God which is reflected upon us, moves the heart quite perceptibly and, when the heart has been able to rise in devotion to the everlasting light, there is shed in it a heavenly glory that may be compared to a bright light. This is no doubt what a certain hymn writer has in mind when he uses the following words, which, however, must be correctly understood:

*As flames by playful breezes driven
Throw golden radiance all around,*

*So truly he whose soul has light from God in heaven
May be a shining light in darkness most profound.*

One more comparison may serve to throw light on this subject. We have already seen how the bride was mournfully searching for her bridegroom until she found him, to the great joy of her heart; and behold, in some respects the two disciples on the way to Emmaus had a similar experience (Luke 24). Their faith was quite feeble as they walked along the road; they thought and spoke of Christ; they even talked with Him, for He was personally present; but they did not know Him, and so they did not get much consolation from what He said. When the Scriptures were opened to them their hearts were burning within them, and the flame of their love and longing rose directly up to God. But afterwards their eyes were opened when He broke the bread, and they knew Jesus in His beauty. Then this glorious splendor beamed upon their souls and into the inmost depths of their hearts, and they were well-nigh beside themselves with divine joy—which, again, is the completely divine rest in faith.

CHAPTER FOUR

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1. This view is further corroborated by the ancient church teachers, such as Augustine, Macarius, Cassiodorus, Prosperus, Bernhard, Tauler, Rusbrochius, John Abbas, John of Cruce, Lyra.
2. By our Lutheran, or recent teachers, such as Luther, Arndt, Lütke-
mann, Müller, Breithaupt, Richter.
3. By Reformed theologians, such as Baxter, Drelincourt, Man-
ton, Jurieu, Sonthom, Bunyan.

1. After these Bible passages, examples, and parables I wish to adduce some well known testimonies of different church teachers, from well-nigh all centuries of the Christian era, thereby elucidating and strengthening as much as possible the position held above. May every prudent Christian interpret the words of these ancient teachers no less in love than in truth, and if anything should appear too lofty* for him, let him take it for what it may be worth rather than pass a rash judgment on it, considering carefully 2 Peter 2:2. The special application of each quotation from the church teachers is left to the dear reader himself, whether he wishes

* The quotations from Tauler, Rusbrochius (and possibly others) may contain some unusual expressions. These are not approved of unless they contain good sense, intentionally or expressly, and I do not want them to be understood to the effect that they differ from the public doctrine and confession of our church.

to use it partly or wholly in connection with the subject discussed.

Augustine says: You shout and cry and deafen my deafness. You glitter and glare and take away my blindness, you burned (with love) and I drew my breath, and yet did not perish. I have tasted some, and still I hunger and thirst, you have touched me (*actio reflexa*) and I am set on fire to get your peace (*Libr. X Conf. c. 27*). I often find an emotion in me which, if permanent in me, could be nothing but eternal life (*Idem ap. Arnd. Lib. 3, c. 6*).

Macarius says: Even if one attained to the calmest possession of grace, if he could reach mysteries and revelations and the great sweetness of grace, he still has sin within. Persons of this kind take themselves to be free and perfect by means of the immense grace of light which they have received. . . . But until now I never saw one that was free; for once upon a time I too received some of this kind of grace, and I have learnt from experience that no human being is perfect. . . . At another time the doors are opened to it (the soul), and thru these it enters where the many mansions are; as it moves on, more mansions are thrown open, hundreds of them ahead and other hundreds behind; then the soul becomes rich, and the richer it becomes, the greater the number of new wonders revealed to it. To the soul as child and heir are confided such things as human nature cannot express, nor mouth and tongue utter (*Homil. 8, 5*).—The same author: Whoever is anointed in the inward man with the sanctifying and gladdening, heavenly and spiritual oil of delight, receives the token of everlasting life, namely, the

pledge of the Holy Spirit and consolation (Homil. 17). Still more by the same author: Sometimes it is refreshed by the Holy Spirit as if by a glorious beverage, so that it becomes intoxicated with divine and spiritual glories (Homil. 16).

Cassiodorus: Oh, how blessed is the soul when, from certain things, it can perceive in itself God's kindness and the entering of the heavenly grace and its presence. It is moved by a sweetness and agreeableness so that it gets beside itself, shouts with joy from its heart in heavenly pleasure; at once the Lord shows it His presence, all of its senses are made glad. Its understanding becomes quite clear, its vivid longing becomes fervent, it moves and reaches forth to embrace Him tho it knows that it has Him, and binds itself to Him with the sweetest bonds of fervent love. O soul, it is your merciful One who, unseen but full of compassion and kindness, approaches you to awaken you and throw Himself into the bosom of your love. Thus He hands to you the first fruits of His sweetness, not in order that you may be filled at once, but that you by such experience may taste and be sure how sweetly you may feel Him when He is revealed in His glory (De Amic.).

Prosperus: Whoever is illumined by the rays of a pure faith is filled with divine light, and is himself made a light (Sentent. Lib. I, c. 82).

Bernhard: Then the hidden treasure often, tho only for a moment, shows itself in our souls, and this contemplation is worth more than heaven and earth (Apud Arnd in Praef. Lib. 3). The same author: Pray that you may have the light of devo-

tion, a mild and clear day, a Sabbath and holiday for your soul (Serm. 3 de Circumsis. Dom.).

Still another by Augustine, the first author quoted by us: When I was admonished to go into myself I also went direct into the innermost of myself, and with my soul's eye I have seen the Lord in His undimmed light. Whoever perceives and knows this, knows and perceives eternity (Confess. Libr. I, C. 10).

Tauler says in a booklet on the Inner Man Contemplating God, which in the most recent Halle edition is added to the rest of his writings: If we are to taste God and find eternal life in ourselves we must, above all sensation, aim, and expression (N. B.: In the day of Tauler this way of speaking was not considered objectionable), go into God, and there we shall, simply and without mediation of images, be lifted by love to an exhaustion of the soul, being opened in love of God and dying away from all listening to created things. There we are made into words, transformed and shaped in conformity with the eternal Word, which is the image of the Father, and in the open and pure sense of our mind we attain to a brightness that penetrates us or embraces us or breathes thru us, as the air is penetrated by the brightness of the sun.

And a little farther on he says: We must get above ourselves, then we shall find that the Spirit of God draws us out of ourselves. This is the super-essential love, with which we become one, and which we also possess, deeper and broader than all things. This possession is a simple but abysmally profound taste of all that is of God, and of life eternal. In

this taste we are sunk away, beyond everything utterable, in the profound tranquillity of the Deity, which is eternally immovable. That this is true may be known by faith, otherwise not; for where it is, and how it is, and what it is, neither speech nor training can make out. (So far Tauler). That Tauler himself has had a sublime gift of grace may be seen from his biography (Halle edition), where the reflex power of faith is called an emotion from the Most High. But this biography is not considered authoritative, because it contains much that is fabulous.

Rusbrochius says: When the Spirit of God draws us inward He shows us the countenance of love and makes us free and takes us away from all creatures, sheds the fulness of His grace upon us and teaches us the exercise of perfect love, that is, the contemplation, the taste, the knowledge, the love, the pleasure, which exists between God and us and which the one finds in the other and, finally, the sweet flowing out and melting away in love. Thus we taste and feel His consolation, and He eats and drinks with us, and we with Him (De Vera Cont. c. 15). The same author: As the rising sun instantaneously shoots his beams of light from the east to the west, giving light and warmth to everything, in the same manner Christ, the eternal Sun, dwelling in the uppermost realm of the Spirit, in less than one instant, enlightens the inmost part of man, that is, his heart and conscious powers, penetrating them and kindling them with His splendor. On the other hand, those who remain in the lower parts, by the external senses, and with good inten-

tions and by the grace of God train themselves in external virtues can show forth many fruits of virtue; but of the wine of inner joy and of spiritual consolation they taste very sparingly and very little: these are called faithful servants by Tauler, as opposed to the confidential friends; therefore, whoever intends to partake of the light of Christ and to perceive it must strive might and main for what is above (*De Nupt. Spirit. Lib. 4, C. 6, 8, etc.*). In the same book we read: In this love-tryst two spirits meet in combat, God's Spirit and our spirit. Indeed God descends into us by His Spirit, and thus we are moved by love; but by the loving power our spirit inclines and again bows down into God, by which God is again moved. By the contact between the two there arises a love combat. Here the two spirits throw their fire and rays upon each other, and as they show each other their faces, it occurs that the one again nods and bows to the other with the very greatest eagerness (*C. 56*).

The ancients called this great mystery not only a beaming light and a clarification, which has been amply proven, but some use the word overshadowing, in conformity with *Luke 1:35*. J. Abbas also has the same thing in mind when he says: Whoever has not attained to the perfect grace of the Holy Spirit (that is, in a very abounding measure) will not try and enjoy the manifold overshadowings of grace (*Scol. in Climac. Grand. 27 C. 9*). Similarly J. a Cruce: This is the shadow which the Holy Spirit brings to a soul by all His glory of virtues and attributes, coming so close to it that He in some manner gently touches it, but by such overshadowing

even enters into the most intimate union with it, and it feels, it tastes God's image and nature; all this takes place in a shadow as clear as light (1 C. Cant. 3, V. 2). The same author: The Holy Spirit struggles with a human spirit united with Him to raise it from the flesh and make it perfect, for which reason He penetrates the soul with His glorious testimonies and makes it almost divine, absorbing it, as it were, by imparting Himself to it by such manifold power. Here it tastes God just as He is, and He seems so sweet that it must say: O Thou Flame of God's Holy Spirit, Thou that art penetrating my soul's essence so intimately, so tenderly, branding me, as it were, by Thy ardent and kindly love, how friendly Thou art in manifesting such a great longing for me, in imparting Thyself to me to a perfect, eternal life. This longing and desire I have not understood before, tho my heart yearned for Thee (direct faith), but now that I am refreshed in love (reflex), my heart is playing in the living God, with delight and with great harmony (*Flamma Amoris Vita*, Cant. I, V. 6).

Lyra: From special grace, by a sensation of divine sweetness, there sometimes occurs a contemplation of God which is occasionally granted to holy men while they are still on the way (*Ap. Stenger. de Obsignat.* p. 47).

2. Martin Luther: We cannot learn to know God in the sweetest and best manner unless it comes thru His works, which are felt and experienced in us. But where we perceive how faithful that God is who looks down into the deep, there we become so very fond of Him, there our heart is exalted in

joy, and then and there is the Holy Spirit, there we learn by experience such an indescribable art and desire in an instant (Tom. 6, Wittenb. Germ. II, b).

J. Arndt in True Christianity: Then, instantaneously as it were, the reason and understanding is touched and captivated by the divine light, the will by the heavenly longings, and the memory by holy joy. However, neither reason, nor the will, nor memory can comprehend or keep such things; for it does not endure or remain always in the powers of the soul, but is hidden in the inmost depth and essence of the soul, and soon and suddenly it leaves all perceptible powers of the soul (Book 3, C. 6). The same author: No one can know this except the one who has experienced it. A person can feel and observe it, but it is impossible for him to express it; for it is a spiritual, mysterious, and divine matter which he dares not tell lest the Bridegroom should take offense at it, He who desires to dwell mysteriously and silently in the heart. In this manner the Bridegroom comes, so to speak, thru spiritual doors to the bride, teaches and instructs her and grants her His presence, not in bodily form but by a light in the faith, by an illumination of the understanding, by a taste for devotion, by a jubilant shout of joy, by a joyous leap for love, by a kiss of peace, by an embrace of fidelity. At such a moment the adversary does not venture to approach, for the Bridegroom is present, and no outsider dares to interfere; for the soul is surrounded by many thousand angels keeping guard. Then the humble soul has become a temple of God, an abode of wisdom, a throne for the Word, a house for the Comforter, a chamber for the

Bridegroom, an ark of the covenant, a golden mercy-seat, a tabernacle of holiness, a sacred place of rest, a sealed well, an earthly heaven, a celestial dwelling. During this most sacred embrace many glorious kisses are given, there are many joyous conversations which no human ear has heard, no proud eye has seen, and which has not originated in any carnally inclined human heart. Such pleasures are suitable only for those that are humble. It is hidden manna, it is honey and honeycomb, it is wine mixed with milk. When it is enjoyed the hearts become glad and are refreshed, so that the labor and hardships of this pilgrimage become easier to them. (*Ver-einigung der Gläubigen mit Christo*, Rinteln edition, 1654).

In True Christianity I find still another clearly expressed testimony on this subject, and it reads as follows: Thru such fervent prayer a person is carried to the supernatural prayer (by Barenius this is explained thus: Not as tho the other grades of prayer were works of nature, but this is supernatural in the highest degree and above the others), which occurs, as Tauler says, thru a true union with God, by faith, when our created spirit is sunk and melted away, so to speak, in God's eternal and uncreated Spirit. And then, in an instant, that very thing takes place which has taken place in all saints from the beginning of the world. And as a thousand pounds of gold is to a farthing, so is this heavenly splendor and ray to all pleasures in created things. And by this true faith the mind is so completely filled with the love of God that, as long as this experience lasts, it can think of nothing but God. . . .

What the soul then finds and feels is unspeakable; and if asked, while in this lofty devotion, What do you know, find, and perceive?—it would answer, A good which is above all good. What do you see? A beauty excelling all beauty. What do you taste? A sweetness above all sweetness. Indeed it would say: All the words I speak about it are like shadows compared with the thing itself; for the noble and precious things that I find I cannot express Here the soul tastes how sweet and kind the Lord is; here it has the right understanding of what it is to know God and to love Him. And in knowing Him it loves Him, and in loving Him it craves for Him all the time, to have Him and to enjoy Him . . . Such splendor does not last long, but usually it is like a glimpse that quickly passes away. . . . And when it is gone, the soul makes a careful search if it may perchance find it again, and again experience such heavenly taste and light and become united with it (Book 2, C. 19). This statement is supported by the sainted Varenius, who says: This is nothing but a special grace which God grants to those whose hearts are spiritual and bold in God and who urgently, incessantly, fervently yearn and groan for God. Such spirit and boldness is found in very few people and decidedly the smallest portion of them; no one, however, should despair of the prayer which is not made in such boldness, provided it is made in Christian devotion and with a believing heart. For God distributes His Spirit and the gifts of prayer differently. (So far Varenius).

B. Lütke mann says: The heavenly refreshing may be looked upon as the highest enlightenment.

Then Christ, seated in His temple, is teaching. But what He then speaks in the soul is a heavenly word, an unspeakable word, by which the soul in an instant perceives more than the whole world can teach it. It feels with intense fervor that His teaching is not mere words or empty talk; just now, instantaneously, He reveals to the soul a clear and perceptible knowledge which otherwise could be obtained only by dint of great pains (Vorschmack Gøttlicher Güte, p. 723). The same author: In order that we shall not be vexed under the cross, God sometimes visits the soul with a heavenly sweetness. Thereby He sweetens the cross; therefrom came the boldness of the martyrs; for when God begins to be sweet to us inwardly, then all bitterness passes away. This spiritual sweetness we must regard as a token of the new name which the Lord promises to His upright combatants (Rev. 2:17). Christ not only gives us a good testimony before His Father, but also beareth witness in us with His Spirit (Rom. 8:16). And the Spirit beareth witness because the Spirit is the truth (1 John 5:7). The inward new man, the hidden spirit of his mind, perceives within himself a living power of the Spirit of Christ and is so captivated thereby that he must confess that the Word preached by the Spirit is Spirit and truth. Thus the Spirit of Christ is (by reflection) united with our spirit, making one out of two, joining us unto the Lord in one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17; Vorschmack Gøttlicher Güte, p. 269).

Dr. H. Müller: Tho no one in our times is caught up as Paul was (2 Cor. 12:2), a devout soul may, nevertheless, be enraptured in God in such a

manner that it forgets itself and all created things and rests sweetly in Him. But this can be understood by no one except by those who have experienced it; but whoever has experienced it cannot, however, express how such heavenly, mysterious revelation came about. For God is an incomprehensible and ineffable good; but it should be carefully noted that when a soul wishes to be immersed in God and to taste His delectable sweetness, it must previously get rid of the love for created things; for how can God be mirrored in one who is painted over with pictures of created things? A mirror receives only one picture (Apostolische Schlusskette, p. 89).

The same author: A kiss is a real and cordial voice by which one speaks his love into the heart of another. Now, when God by His Spirit assures us of His love in our hearts, this gives rise to the true delight of the soul. The Holy Spirit is called a Spirit of love, because He seals God's love to us in the heart: It is the sweet kiss, God's heavenly talk in us. This refreshing fills the soul with divine light, as the oil acts so that the light is not quenched. When God draws the heart after Him by joyous emotions, He teaches and gives light in the heart. Him who has this experience and sensation I call an enlightened person even tho he does not know the alphabet (Heavenly Love-Kisses, C. 13).

Breithaupt: According to all this, by fire we understand a mysterious visitation of God: on the basis of faith, the Holy Spirit calls forth in the conscience of a child of God a burning and brilliant power by which a person is led, etc. (Apost. Straf- und Trost-Pred. P. 57).

Christoph Friedrich Richter: It cannot well be denied that the emotions of grace often manifest themselves so strongly and abundantly in the soul that these streams of living water also pour into the outer senses and thus can be perceived even there. It is certain, however, that whatever is thus tasted and felt by means of the senses of the outer man, is not quite the thing in itself, and cannot be considered to be anything but a reflection and effulgence coming from the divine light which rises powerfully in the soul. Hence, such sensation can easily be dimmed or even entirely taken away by external hindrances, while the kingdom of God in the soul is something that remains permanently (*Betrachtung vom Adel und Ursprung der Seelen*, p. 73).

3. Richard Baxter: Is there really such a thing as a righteousness that is announced in the sinner's heart as a decisive verdict and sentence? Answer: It happens to many who are justified that a light or some sparks from God's face give them an assurance of their justification, tho such assurance, on the other hand, in many persons is quite indistinct, dubious, and inconstant (*Meth. Theol. Christ. P. 3, C. 27, 8:44*).

Thomas Godwin: When God in prayer seems to look kindly upon you or falls on your neck and kisses you, as it were (*Luke 15:20*), it is a token that He has graciously accepted you and your prayer. This is what is meant by the promise: Then shalt thou call, and Jehovah will answer; thou shalt cry, and He will say, Here I am (*Is. 58:9*). It is the drawing nigh and redemption which David prayed

for and received (Ps. 69:18; De Reditu Precum C. 5).

Charles Drelincourt: While I was serving God with such sacred devotion, with such heavenly fire and ardor, God seemed to be pleased with my service, for He filled my heart with an unspeakably glorious joy and with the peace of God which passeth understanding. . . . God gave me a first-fruit and a foretaste of the glory with which He fills His elect in the Heavenly Paradise, and well may I say that my heart was a little paradise completely filled with rejoicing and bliss. In short, I seemed to drink of the river of pleasures flowing out from the throne of God, and God seemed to invite me to eat of the fruit of the tree of life, the leaves of which serve as a healing for the nations (Visites Charitables, P. 1, C. I).

P. du Moulin: The soul enjoys an indescribable dignity and joy from perceiving God's love to us, which in turn makes us love Him, God and the believing soul mutually embracing each other, tho the soul is far from the perfect union as long as it dwells in the flesh. This is the right peace, which passeth all understanding and keeps our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. This is the transfiguration of the soul, and the token of its sanctification. It is the betrothal to Christ and the pledge taken for the wedding. All the kingdoms of the world, the treasures and riches of all kings, all the pleasures at their courts are not worthy of mention or reckoning in comparison with this. If the divine embrace could continue without interruption, the person that contemplates and loves his God would soon be com-

pletely transformed from one image to another, from one glory to another and, like Elijah, be carried away with a chariot of fire and taken home to heaven (Paix de L' ame, etc. Libr. 7, C. 7).

Dr. Thomas Manthon, in his *Meditations on the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor*: Verily, in contemplating God, many a Christian is engulfed and carried away from himself, as it were, by his impetuous love to God, his fervent yearning for the heavenly graces, by which he is moved in such a manner that by his wonderment at God and his rejoicing in Him he even now actually seems to be in heaven (Med. II).

M. Jurieu, in *Practique de la Dévotion, ou Traité de l' Amour Divin*, a devotional tract, takes up this matter, but does not discuss it in detail. The reader may peruse, in particular, the twelfth chapter of the first part.

Emanuel Sonthom: The way of Christianity and piety is made easy by the hidden, mysterious, and intense consolation which God sheds in those hearts that serve Him. I call this consolation mysterious and hidden because no one knows it except those who have experienced it, and Christ Himself calls it the hidden manna which no one knows but he who tastes it. David speaks thus: How great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee.—No tongue can express the sweetness found in this inward consolation, tho we may somewhat guess at it and take measure of it in the words of David referring to the celestial mountains whence the hearts and minds of the pious are refreshed along mysterious and secret paths. Verily, if you have

tasted but one drop of this heavenly joy, you will give up the whole world for another drop or for permission to keep the one (Golden Treasure, P. 242). You may find more on this subject in quotations from the same author (Sonthom) in former paragraphs.

In a tract on Coming and Welcoming with Jesus, John Bunyan says: Does not Jesus at times give you from Himself an effulgence tho you do not even see Him long enough to count to twenty? Do you not occasionally find the right warmth of His wings which overshadow your face and throw a sort of glow into your spirit in the same manner as the rays of the sun do when he suddenly breaks thru the clouds, but at once passes away and disappears again (P. 399). An anonymous writer says in a book on A Believing Soul's Secret and Confidential Conversation with God, translated from the French, prefaced by J. Lange, and published in Halle (1719): In such a condition is indeed also that soul which falls into a sort of slumber while contemplating God, charmed by gazing at Him, refreshed by His sweetness, and which is occupied with things divine and is refreshed by God's kindness as by a fountain, while at the same time it is also kindled with fire.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONTENTS

1. The so called reflex faith further demonstrated by some trustworthy examples and by the experiences of some pious souls, such as Theodor a Brakel.
2. Janneway.
3. Johann Arndt.
4. Also from some known Church hymns.
5. Summary of fundamental names and expressions on this matter.

1. As further evidence and light on this wonderful power of the reflex faith, or the sweet sensation of the effulgence of the grace of God in the heart, I shall mention a few very remarkable and reliable incidents given in a publication called *Leben der Gläubigen* (Halle, 1701): Theodor a Brakel, a pious-minded and God-fearing person in Friesland, says, among other things, in his autobiography: I always heard the preachers speak about the joy and delight in the Holy Spirit as a foretaste of eternal life. Then I would ask myself, What does this mean, anyway? O that the time may come when I can feel and experience such a thing! Once it happened that when I came home I found nobody in the house. Then I thought: Now I have a chance to pray without being abashed, and all at once it occurred to me that I would pray to God to grant me a foretaste of heaven; then I knelt down and prayed

to God as earnestly as I could that He would hear my prayer. I opened the New Testament and, if I remember rightly, I looked for John 16:23: Verily, verily, I say unto you, if ye shall ask anything of the Father, He will give it you in my name. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be made full (Explanation: And ye shall be sure that ye stand in the true faith). Thereupon I put the book away, leaving it open, and placed this passage before God in my prayer, saying: Here, my God, etc. When I had prayed thus and kept God's promise before Him, I finally was so gladdened, and my heart and my thoughts were so highly exalted, and as I thus saw God with my soul's eyes, I became united with God etc., and also filled with such a joy and peace and sweetness that I cannot sufficiently express it. For this was the hidden manna, the white stone upon which a new name was written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it (Rev. 2:17). Then, like the man of Ethiopia, I went my way rejoicing (Acts 8). And for two or three days I was with my mind in heaven; I seemed to see the Lord, my soul being happy and calm. But as time passed, this experience began to dwindle. However, I did not tell this to anybody, but in my innocence I walked like a child alone with God and served Him willingly and joyfully. (This happened in his early youth, when he was about fourteen years old). Later on, in the prime of his manhood, he said: During prayer and meditation I have occasionally been exalted so high into the love of God that I seemed to be quite engulfed by it. This was so lofty that I could not

comprehend it. I sensed a union with my God and Savior, with my Brother and my Bridegroom. I perceived His abounding love, which is sweeter than wine (S. S. 1:2). His banner over me was love (S. S. 2:4). I seemed to be drunk with His love. So I again embraced His neck with the arms of my love. Then my soul strove to remain in this estate, yea, to be more and more abundant therein. In such loving union with God I often had to feel that my body was deranged and indisposed, sometimes I even had to desist from this fervent embrace; for it made my heart and flesh languish, and it seemed as tho I should die from it. Oh, how sweet the Lord is! In view of this, what must the eternal exercises in perfect love be! At the same place he says: At times God permitted me to see quite deeply into the way in which He has loved me with an everlasting love, so that He gave me His Son.

2. Furthermore, it is seen from the biography of Janneway, an English theologian, how he, when his father, a minister in England, lay on his deathbed in great pain, went and prayed fervently to God to gladden his father's heart abundantly with the joy of the Holy Spirit. God heard him. After a long silence his father exclaimed: O my dear son, now it has come, now it has come; glory to God, for now I can die! The Spirit of God has borne witness with my spirit that I am a child of God (by a direct, inward testimony). Now I can look at God as at my dear Father; now I can say: He is my Friend, my beloved One. My heart is filled, and I can receive no more. Now I know what is in those words: The peace of God which passeth all understanding. I

know now what that white stone is upon which is written a new name which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it. The weeping that you saw in me came from such a great and mighty love and joy that I could not help it, and I cannot tell how gloriously God has revealed Himself to me. If this joy had been a little greater I doubt whether I could have endured it, for I think it would have drawn the soul away from the body. (So far about the father.)

Of his son Janneway it is stated in the same place that a few weeks before the end came his soul was almost continually filled with heavenly, ineffable joy; he would often shout: O that I could make it understood what I feel now! O that I could show you what I see! O that I could indicate but a thousandth part of the sweetness which I now find in Christ! Then you would understand that it is worth while to strive after godliness.

3. The dear Johann Arndt, who was so rich in spirit and faith, in his biography, which is known everywhere, mentions an incident that may be of service to us too.

Awaking after a short sleep, he looked up and repeated the words: We beheld His glory, glory as of the Only Begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). And when his wife asked him when he had seen this glory, he answered: Just now I saw it. O what glory, a glory which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man. This glory I have seen.—From this we may understand how powerful the Holy

Spirit was in his heart, calling forth only consolation, peace, and joy.

In Christian Scriver's *Treasury of the Soul*, Part IV, is found, among other things, the following remarkable story about a greatly afflicted theologian who was known to the author but whose name is not mentioned. The afflicted man, we are told, went to a quiet, secluded place, abandoned himself to his thoughts, groaned, prayed, and cried, and finally exclaimed in a loud voice, yes, screamed in anguish from his oppressed heart: O God, God, do help me! O God—where art Thou, what becomes of Thee? Wilt Thou not help me, Thy wretched creature? Or shall I come to think that there is no God, that Thy Word is not truth? Oh, yes, there must, there must be a God, it must be true! Just as he cried out from his heart in anguish, he was flooded with a light from heaven, not unlike a flash of lightning, which made him fall to the ground. He did not know where he was until after a while he came to himself again; and when he collected his thoughts he found that all anxiety and darkness and doubt had completely vanished from his heart, which, on the other hand, was filled with the greatest certainty, joy, and boldness. (So far Scriver.) The person referred to was no doubt the sainted Dr. Martin Weller. Several instances of a similar nature may be found in Count Henckel's *Letzte Stunden*, especially P. 1, P. 44, 70, 148, etc.

I shall also add a few remarkable words from Israel Murschel's tract called *Aurora, sive de Prae-gustu Vitae Aeternae* (Frankf. 1650). On page 350 he says: I once looked inward, into myself,

and then I saw an image of the light of God's countenance in me, found spiritual things opened in my inmost soul, and a holy silence settled in me, so that everything outside of me became quiet, and everything within me was at rest. In my heart, turned heavenward, I felt the sweetest joy, I forgot everything and denied myself altogether, I saw Thee alone, O God! Then the partition between God and my knowledge was gone, my meditation was not veiled, my mind was completely changed. There was contemplation and delight beyond measure, I found myself in God and God in me. I forgot myself thru Thee, and my understanding was totally illuminated by the Holy Spirit, etc.

4. Here belong also the lofty and glorious expressions found especially in the third and fourth stanzas of the hymn, *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern* (Philipp Nicolai, 1599). A heavenly reflection of the wonderfully sweet grace of God has no doubt been more familiar to the sainted author than to most of those who sing the hymn after him. The third stanza:

*O holy Jesus, when the light
Of Thy dear face shines on me bright,
Then heavenly joy doth thrill me.
O Lord, my sure and stedfast good,
Thy Word, Thy Spirit, body, blood—
With life, new life, they fill me.
This day,
I pray:
Mercy showing,
Grace bestowing,*

*Look on me, Lord,
Thine own Word is all my plea, Lord.*

*Come, precious Savior, from on high!
Come, let my soul no longer sigh,
But fill me with Thy presence.
No longer hide from me Thy face,
I languish for Thy blest embrace—
Draw me into Thy essence.
Weak, worn,
Tired, torn,
How I greet Thee,
Raptured meet Thee,
Glad to sever
Every sin-scarred bond forever.*

Fourth stanza:

*Thou, mighty Father, in Thy Son
Didst love me ere Thou hadst begun
This ancient world's foundation.
Thy Son hath made a friend of me,
And when in spirit Him I see
I've done with tribulation.
What bliss
Is this!
Where He liveth
Me He giveth
Life for ever;
Nothing me from Him can sever.*

Of similar content is the hymn: Die lieblichen Blicke die Jesus mir giebt. Stanzas 2-5 are given below:

*Those radiant eyes—how they set me on fire!
My inmost confesses
His loving caresses
Arousing a burning desire.
O heavenward aim!
O God-kindled flame!
And therefore go hence,
All earth-ridden sense!*

*Our sun and its rays, how they charm and enthrall!
A fiery furnace
That even may burn us—
The eyes of the Bridegroom are brighter than all.
When He's on the go
—Like fire on straw—
Your poor little glow
Seems cold as the snow.*

*Thy love fairly kills me, and yet I have life.
My body is shrinking,
My mettle is sinking—
And still, O how blessed the strife!
O Jesus, Thy light,
It gives me fresh might:
What life is in me
I live it in Thee.*

*A fire from God I can feel in my soul.
Thy joys keep me weeping,
And yet I am keeping
Thyself, O my life and my all.
O sweetest of woes!
Now, tell me, who knows
Why trouble and toil
Seem honey and oil?*

5. I consider it superfluous to adduce further testimony on this point. I would make this remark, however: Tho the above mentioned men of God use quite different expressions, it is obvious that they unanimously agree as to the nature of the subject discussed, and what they have in mind is nothing but what is called the heavenly and wholly divine rest in faith. It is the abundant shedding of the love of God, the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, a majestic beam of grace, a contemplation of God, wine of heavenly joy, a divine fire from above, a spark from eternity, a flame of love, a flash of lightning from the sanctuary of God, a gently cooling breeze, a penetrating fragrance, a divine embrace, a kiss from the Son, a holy and lovely fellowship with the Bridegroom, wine of joy, and everlasting river of pleasures flowing out from the throne of the Lamb, a foretaste of the wedding of the Lamb, a heavenly, hidden manna, an anointment with the oil of gladness, a white stone with the new name—and whatever descriptions, mostly allegorical, may be used for describing something that is indescribable.

CHAPTER SIX

CONTENTS

1. The third main question: Is the above mentioned reflex rest an integral part of the saving faith? or (what amounts to the same thing) must all believers necessarily experience this? is answered in the negative.
2. This statement proved by quotations from Holy Writ.
3. By the character and essence of the thing itself.
4. By ancient teachers, such as Macarius, Tauler, Rusbroch, Lyra.

1. In the preceding chapter we have clearly seen that there is such a thing as the formal and inward testimony of the Holy Spirit with our spirit, and also what the characteristics of this reflex rest are. Now it is in order to ascertain whether it is something common or something peculiar, whether it is found in every believing child of God or only in some highly favored, firm believers, and, consequently, whether only those who have had such experiences of grace or also those pious persons who know but little or nothing about it have a reason to hope for salvation and assurance of their state of grace. To this exceedingly important question I venture to answer in the profoundest humility and according to the Word of God, that the first part requires a No, the second part, a Yes. I therefore say that the exceedingly sweet heavenly reflection, with the inward assurance and witness of the Holy Spirit, when

faith, rising to God, consolingly embraces its aim and object—Christ and His grace—that it returns into itself somewhat like reflected rays and brings home an indescribable delight and heavenly sweetness, being at the same time so firmly assured of its state of grace and sonship as tho the soul were already in heaven, before the throne of God—I say that all this is something peculiar which is granted to highly favored souls, but not common to all the elect children of God, be it outside of or during the state of spiritual affliction. It is enough when there is found in the penitent heart this direct faith described at the beginning, or this fleeing to and finding refuge in Jesus, the Savior of the world, and when the fruits of this faith, especially love and obedience, are in conscious exercise, at which the struggle between the Spirit and the flesh, together with a prompting to insistent prayer, be it intense or feeble, is not lacking.

The arguments and proofs to be used in the discussion of this point are taken from Holy Writ and from the very nature of the thing itself, and, finally, from the testimonies of some highly enlightened church teachers.

2. The apostle Paul says: All have not faith (2 Thess. 3:2).

I readily admit that here he speaks of the direct, saving faith, and it is more than certain that not every one who calls himself a Christian has embraced and carried Jesus home in faith, whence it occurs that tho Christ is the Redeemer of all men, it is nevertheless true that since faith, the only means of embracing Christ, is not everybody's property,

the death of Christ does not benefit everybody, but to the impenitent and to unbelievers it becomes a savor from death unto death. But if we apply these words: All have not faith, to our reflex rest in faith, which, properly speaking, is not faith itself but the power of faith and its consoling sensation, it may be truly said of this too, that it is not everybody's and is not only not found in sham Christians but not even in all true, believing Christians—at any rate, not to a highly perceptible degree, which is the point discussed here.

Some of the plainest Scripture passages serving to prove this have already been quoted on former occasions, but they deserve our attention here too. Paul says to souls that are already believing: The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:13). That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of His might (Eph. 1:17-19). We also pray always for you that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfil every desire of goodness and every work of faith (2 Thess. 1:11). And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment (Phil. 1:9). I thank my God always, making mention of

thee in my prayers—that the fellowship of thy faith may become effectual, in the knowledge of every good thing that is in you, unto Christ (Philemon 4-6).

In these five quotations we must observe: First, that their contents are almost the same; secondly, that in all of them mention is made of an unusually high degree of grace and of faith, experience, manifestation, consolation, and sweetness, and, accordingly, the glorious nature of our divine rest in faith is also mentioned; thirdly, that in all of them the apostle speaks as one praying, wishing; fourthly, that he pronounces these wishes not for the intended benefit of unconverted, unbelieving people, but for the benefit of persons who were already justified and saved believers, which is clearly and conspicuously proven by what precedes and follows every quotation, the apostle praising them for their faith and love.

Now, having made out that these points are incontestable, I arrive at the following conclusion: whatever is wished for the benefit of those who already are justified believers, no matter how glorious it may be in itself, it is not, properly speaking, an essential part of the justifying faith; for otherwise it should have been there already before those persons could be praised as justified believers. But in the five passages quoted above wishes are expressed to the effect that those who already believe and are justified may have the full, bold hope, powerful consolation, rich knowledge, wisdom and revelation, the glorious power, the mighty work of faith, a manifold, abounding, and sweet experience, etc. There-

fore, none of these things belong to the essence of the justifying faith. And furthermore, whatever is not an essential part of faith is not common to all believers; therefore, the above mentioned experiences are peculiar only to some highly favored souls. At any rate, they are not common to all with reference to the time when they are experienced. To some the divine rest comes immediately after justification, to others only after some length of time, and to some it never comes until the very hour of death. And tho this highly perceptible and joyous glimpse of grace is not experienced by a person during his whole life, a justified person lives nevertheless, and shall live eternally thru his simple, direct faith, by which in life and death he clings to Jesus as the aim and object of his faith, or, more correctly, is kept and maintained by Him. Grace, says the apostle, was given unto each one of us according to the measure of the gift of Christ (Eph. 4:7). So every one can and shall be content with his talent of grace; for the very least talent is abundantly sufficient to sustain his soul.

3. If we look into the very foundation of this matter we also find that our position is correct. For in discussing the plain, direct faith we made it perfectly clear that the real character and nature of the justifying faith consists in this only, that the penitent heart flees to Christ and lays hold on His merits. In view of the incontrovertible metaphysical truth that each thing can have no more than one sole essence, one sole inner kind and nature, it is evident that this rest, whether it be the active and rational or passive and heavenly aspect of faith,

does not belong to the essence of faith (otherwise one and the same thing would have a double essence), and that a person may, without having it, be justified and saved, provided he has a heart which is silently devout, filled with good intentions, and with sincere longing turns to Jesus and to nothing else.

4. Furthermore, listen to what is said on this subject by ancient as well as modern teachers, who indeed speak and think highly of the rest in reflex faith but do not regard it as an essential part of the saving faith, nor do they make it out to be something common and necessary to every believer, but call also those blessed who are inexperienced in this exalted, perceptible grace, provided they otherwise live honestly and piously before God.

Macarius: Those who say that if one did everything commanded but could not obtain the expected grace (rest in faith), nothing in the wide world could help him, they speak very wickedly; for there is no injustice in God, so that, when we properly observe our duty, He should forget what His part is. When the separation of body and soul is approaching, make it a point to continue the struggle diligently, to accept the promises, to remain in the faith, to beseech in humility, and I tell you that you shall depart in joy, have a full boldness, and be revealed as one who is worthy of the kingdom; for such a Christian (tho hungry and empty) already has fellowship with God (Libr. IV, C. 8).

Every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart, and tho his body may be immaculate, he is

regarded as an adulterer. On the other hand, one who in his heart turns from evil and in longing and seeking clings to the Lord, that is, in a constant expectation and preparation which is pleasing to God, he is already in fellowship with God; and he has this very thing as a great gift from God: he waits for the Lord, diligently leading a virtuous life etc. See another testimony by Macarius on the same point (Homil. 8).

Johann Tauler: But it often happens that the Lord permits some souls to lie prostrate as tho they were still sick, while in fact they are perfectly sound, but do not know it (they do not feel the consolation which the direct witness of the Holy Spirit gives the soul), supposing themselves to be weak and sick during their whole life. To their own great benefit the all-wise God permits them to remain in this mind and opinion; for He knows and sees that if they were fully aware of their soundness they would soon backslide and become fond of themselves and of created things, as they were before. Thus it is the result of divine love and fidelity that such persons are left in ignorance, fear, affliction, and dejection while in this life, tho in fact they have advanced so far in true Godliness that they would not knowingly sin against God tho they could gain the whole world thereby. But some one might say: Well, what happens by and by to these people who live in such ignorance (uncertainty about their spiritual status) and yet sacrifice themselves in true humility? Answer: When that wished-for day comes when God takes them away from this vale of tears and carries them into His kingdom, then, at the very moment

when they are dismissed from this earth, He sets them free from all their ignorance and enables them to know quite abundantly how fatherly and good His intentions were towards them at all times, consoles them kindly, and before their departure He often permits them to taste the eternal salvation into which they are now entering and in which they are to remain forever. Then such people die in great joy and confidence. But those who in this dense darkness and spiritual poverty keep the faith and a good conscience before God, them He carries quite directly into the indescribable, everlasting life, etc. (Homil. Dom. 3, P. Epiph.)

Elsewhere the same teacher says: Believe me, my friends, if we ran this course seriously, denying ourselves inwardly and outwardly and completely surrendering ourselves in His possession, God would perform wonderful things with us, yes, He would lovingly and rejoicingly lift us and carry us up above everything. Yet, as you are still carnally minded (here the word does not mean wicked, but spiritually feeble and childish; for this is the way Paul uses the word carnal—1 Cor. 3—about regenerate persons) and unable to comprehend these things, be undismayed, nevertheless, and do not become disheartened. There are many people who eat only plain barley and oatmeal bread, and yet they live and are saved. You, likewise: If you cannot rise and get higher up, do not lose courage on account of that, as you are in the habit of doing. Considering how many who, having been favored with the rest in faith, are in the habit of pausing and clinging to this as their supreme good, while they rather

ought to look upon it as a secondary matter—this highly enlightened Tauler (Homil. Dom. XIII, P. Trin.) even goes so far as to say: Therefore, in my opinion it is better that such a person (one who has an untimely hankering for this sweetness) should have no inkling of this, but nevertheless be diligent and valiant in all good works and virtues; for this is the very best way to learn to know oneself.

N. B. These words are particularly remarkable and also founded on truth; for if God uses only sweets to coax us and start us as children, it is no great wonder that we depend on Him and follow Him. But to believe and be obedient without heavenly consolation really proves the presence of a very glorious faith.

This matter is also thoroly discussed in a booklet by said Tauler on the subject, *Of the Inner Man Contemplating God*. In order to be brief we shall select here and there whatever may be of use to us. We must know, he says, that there is still a great difference between the faithful servants and the secret friends of God. By the grace of God the faithful servants choose to keep the commandments, that is, to be obedient, and this is said to be an external or active life. But the secret friends of God also choose to keep, besides the commandments, the counsel of the living God,* that is, inwardly, by the desire of the heart, to cling to God and forsake everything whatever one may have of outward joy and love

* I am afraid that at this point the dear Tauler is yielding somewhat to the Papistical error as to the difference between evangelical commands and counsels. See M. Chemnitz (L. Com.).

and pleasure. Such friends cry, and draw God to themselves from within, and learn the advantage of inward exercises and many hidden features of the spiritual life. But His servants here lay greater stress on external things, that they may be faithful to Him in outward works and outward good exercises. . . . And the faithful servant does more outward work with punctuality than where he is exercising the inward spiritual life. And this is the reason why the person has in himself more impressions of the work that he is doing than of God, for whose sake he is doing it, and thru these pictorial works he becomes an outward person, and he is neither firm nor constant enough to satisfy the counsel of God; for his exercises are more outward than inward, more sensual than spiritual, and yet he is a faithful servant of our Lord in the outward service; but what the secret friends of God perceive remains hidden and unknown to him. All secret friends of God are also His faithful servants. (N. B. This description Tauler has learnt from his Savior Jesus, as may be seen from John 15:15.) But not all the faithful servants are His secret friends, that is, they do not all enjoy the abounding love and intimacy of the Bridegroom. The simplicity of the splendor of God remains hidden from them, and yet they find themselves drawn to God in a strong, ardent love; but they keep their own characteristics and are not consumed and burnt away in the union of love.—Those and other statements made by the highly famous Tauler are somewhat obscure, partly on account of his Old German, partly on account of their profound contents; it is clearly

seen, however, that tho he highly praises and eulogizes the heavenly reflection he does not demand it from everybody, he rather praises also those in their manner who are faithful servants of God or who walk before God in obedience and with a sincere heart even if they are not found worthy of such an exalted, abounding grace or the full secret friendship and, as Solomon says, are not led directly into the inmost chambers, into the heavenly house of wine, nor are pleasures poured out to them.

Rusbroch says on this point: Those who stay in the lower levels, with the outward senses, and, with good intentions, outwardly train themselves in moral virtues by the grace of God, bring forth many fruits of virtue, but of the wine of inward joy and of spiritual consolation they taste very sparingly; therefore, whoever intends to partake of and perceive the light of Christ must strive with all his might to stay in the higher levels and stand exalted before God. (*De ornatu Nupt. Spir. Libr. IV, C. 6, 8*).

On page 114 Lyra quotes Strenger. As this quotation refers to divine rest not as something common but as something peculiar, it is repeated here: From special grace, by a sensation of divine sweetness, there sometime occurs a contemplation of God which is occasionally granted to holy men while they are still on the way.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONTENTS

1. The same is proved by more recent teachers in our own Church: Chemnitz, Lütke mann, Danhauer, Müller, Scriver, Spener, Buddeus, Francke, Lange, Wolf.
2. By Reformed teachers: Taffin, Moulin, Basnage, Jurieu.

1. That the absence of the perceptible heavenly delight is not a token of unbelief but occurs in many pious and believing persons and, consequently, that the rest in faith does not belong to faith itself, is further elucidated by the more recent Protestant teachers.

Martin Chemnitz: Faith must not be judged by the feeling of faith and the spiritual joy; for this fifth degree follows faith and does not belong to its essence; therefore it happens so often that God does not permit the believers to perceive this peace. But when a person keeps this right aim before himself in the Word, and this is followed by said emotion, or striving and longing, at any rate, then his faith is genuine (Art. de Justificat., page 301).

Lütke mann: . If this account of a sweet refreshing of the Spirit is unknown to you, it is to be feared that you have not yet set your heart free from the world. And yet it may happen that even those, mark you well, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit find, nevertheless, that they are lacking this sublime

refreshing. Now, if your heart and your conscience tell you to cling to God, that you are sick of the world, and have a heartfelt longing for divine consolation, then do not worry even if you perceive no distinct sweetness; you know that this is not what constitutes Christianity. You may have tasted this sweetness and the heavenly pleasures, or you may not, be that as it may; but I wish, dear fellow Christian, that you would believe those who have had this experience (*Vorschmack Göttlicher Güte*, P. 755). Faith must be founded not on feelings but on God's promise (*Same work*, 2, 13, P. 530).

Danhauer: If you can find and perceive faith, then thank God; if not, then be content with the longing and the struggle between the Spirit and the flesh (*Catech. Milch*. IX, P. 257).

H. Müller: So this feeling is not exactly necessary unto salvation: Christ said: He that believeth (the seeking faith), and is baptized shall be saved (*Mark* 16:16). But faith is not founded on feelings but on God's promises. Indeed it is the highest power of faith to cling to God's promises in spite of all feelings, as it is said of Abraham: In hope he believed against hope (*Rom.* 4:18). For this very reason God often withdraws His sweet consolation, to test the faith, whether it will hold fast the Word of God (*Heavenly Love Kisses*, C. 13). You say: I perceive no faith. Well, then I want you to know that faith is often in the heart without being perceived. Often a spark of fire lies deep down in the ashes, and no one can see it (*Same*, P. 517).

Chr. Scriver: If the Christian heart cannot immediately rise to such lofty heights as some others,

it should be content with faith and confidence in God's good will. If we cannot become eagles flying aloft, approaching the sun, and staring at it with a steady gaze, let us be content if we are the cooing doves that hide in the crevices of the rock, in the wounds of Jesus. If we cannot shine as stars of the first or second magnitude in the vault of heaven, let us be satisfied because we have a place in the heavens of the Church and have a glimmer as stars of the fourth or fifth magnitude (Soul's Treasury, III, Pr. 4, last paragraph). If you do not perceive, as on the day of Pentecost, the rushing of a mighty wind, then be content with a still, small voice; if you can see no clear and bright flame, then be satisfied if your heart in faith resembles the smoking flax. If you cannot shout with joy (the lofty, triumphant faith), then you would better groan (the beseeching confidence); if you cannot cry, moan for God. If you cannot be filled and drunk with the consolation of the Holy Spirit, then accept what He offers you and praise Him for the hidden power by which He strengthens you inwardly and sustains you against all the threats of the devil. (The same, P. II, Pr. 12, 42.)

P. J. Spener: But it must be observed that this experience and feeling is a degree of enlightening which, in a more abounding and exalted manner, is, as a matter of fact, not found in all believers; but there are many believers in this condition: according to their Father's will they are content with the other knowledge that God has given in the soul, and in most things they do not directly attain to experiences that are associated with feeling and sensation (Ev.

Glaubens Lehre, Fest. Epiphan. Von der Erleuchtung, Lehrpunct par. 4). The same author: It must also be observed that this lack of feeling does not entitle us to judge definitely as to the lack of the thing itself, especially with regard to faith and its delightful perception; for this is among those things by the supposed absence of which God often permits His children to be humiliated. But they must keep in mind that in such a case it may and must be enough for them that they, in the other things and in the fruits of faith, in love, humility, patience, and the like, find what we have declared to be of service in testifying to their state of grace. Even tho our heart condemn us at such a moment, and the perception of faith be withheld—for if it were there, the condemnation by the heart could have nothing to go by—it is declared, nevertheless: Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before Him. How? By loving in deed and truth (I John 3:18, 19). And a little further on: The perception of faith is lacking in many children of God.

F. Buddeus: But the tokens and characteristics which people deduct from their sensations and feelings must be treated very cautiously; for a lack of feeling in spiritual matters must not straightway be taken as a lack of the thing itself, as the sainted Spenser quite clearly points out (Theol. Moral., P. I. C. IV, par. 9).

A. H. Francke: Therefore, if you do not at once find the power of faith in your heart but, on the contrary, see only misery, worry, and distress: then you must not lag behind but raise your voice, your

longing, and your craving for your Savior and cry to Him for mercy (Postill. Dom. XIV, P. Trinit.). Similarly: But if you remain in a continual poverty of spirit and must lead a Christian life in sheer anxiety, fear, and terror, if you would gladly soar up to God in a childlike spirit but have not the necessary strength, tho you otherwise are a hater of sin: then do not let the ways of God seem strange to you. The grain seems to rot in the field; but it is only lacking roots, and afterwards it rises so much greener and finer, and also bears finer and sweeter fruit. For you must not imagine that you can fully find Christ and have a share in Him without a cross (spiritual poverty is the true Christian's chief cross) (Christus der Kern heiliger Schrift).

The same author continues: At the start the feelings are not affected, but it is said: Blessed are they that see not and yet believe. But we must give glory to the Word, as did the believing Abraham (Rom. 4:19), who did not consider his own body, now as good as dead, but gave glory to God. So we must learn to abide with God in faith. But by and by the time shall come when we may say: I beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, etc. At first let your faith be only a faith that adheres and clings to Christ; and do not get weary of it. In due season you shall taste and perceive it as *fides unitiva*, a uniting faith, when you shall really become one heart with Him, His love flowing into your heart, and your love into His heart, etc. (Post. Min. Fer. Nat. 3, of the Glory of Faith).

Joachim Lange: Beginners and those who as yet

have not had any experience are apt to hanker very eagerly for a sweet and almost sensual taste of divine things. They take faith to be only a satisfying confidence, while it is also a plaintive longing, and in drouth and distress it is a hunger and thirst after God (Not. ad Tract. Der geheime Umgang mit Gott. Cap. III).

C. S. Wolfius: But not all those who in truth have faith feel this faith. The real feeling of faith is not an essential part of faith, but it is either a result of faith or may be it (Dissert. Inaugurali de Sensu Fidei Justific. habita Kilonii, sub Praes. Dom. Chr. Kortholt, Thes. 20, 21).

2. Of teachers in the Reformed Church, the following belong here: Jean Taffin: If the soul does not yet find and perceive the peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, behold, it is not written either: He that perceiveth, but he that *believeth*.... shall be saved (Marques des Enfants de Dieu. C. IV, P. 31).

Pierre du Moulin: I have no doubt that there are many among us who in truth possess godliness and faith in Jesus Christ but still complain because they can not feel in themselves the emotions of the Spirit strongly enough and often enough, while they wish with an earnest longing that the seal of the Spirit might be impressed more deeply upon their hearts. Such people must not worry, but be hopeful about themselves; for as the most learned people complain most of their ignorance in many things, so are those who fear and serve God most, apt to be least satisfied with themselves with regard to godliness (Sermon sur Les Paroles, Eph. 4, 30). The same author: There are many who have really ap-

prehended Christ but do not feel that they have apprehended Him. Experience shows that many who come to Christ and seriously embrace Him have not for years been able to perceive any consolation in their souls (*Forme Essens. de la Foy Justi.*, 3, 7).

Basnage: But one might say: Before going to the Lord's Table a person must be sure of the forgiveness of his sins; but what is to be done if he can not in his heart find the joy which in natural order follows upon such forgiveness? It is not strictly necessary that there should be joy and delight where there is forgiveness of sins; for God may be present in a heart with His justifying and saving faith without shedding therein, at the same time, such fervently desired joy, etc. (*De la Communion sainte*, C. VIII, P. 212.)

Thomas Godwin: The reason why God acts in different ways is this: The spiritual consolation, or joy of the spirit, is not a part of the essence of true Christianity, tho of its glorious perfection. One may be without joy and yet be a true Christian. (*A Child of Light walking in the Dark*, P. I, C. 12.) Same author: Do not suppose that you are excluded from the true grace of God because you have not yet experienced any such affliction; for as those have a true faith and the grace of God who have not yet perceived the foretaste of the everlasting joy, so there are also many truly humbled and converted persons who have not yet perceived such anguish and terror (Same book, appendix).

Most emphatically does the famous Jurieu testify that the reflex power of faith, or the joyous sensation, is not so common as many are inclined to

imagine, but is, on the contrary, withheld from the great mass of believers and is granted only to certain highly favored individuals. Read what he says in his *Pratique de la Devotion, ou Traité de l'Amour Divin, Suite de la I. Partic. C. IV*: It is easy to comprehend that when one has perused all the horrible abominations of hell he will be the more disposed to enjoy the beauties of Paradise. When a soul has almost perished from spiritual drought, and God comes and says: My bride, my friend!—behold, then the soul feels a peace that passeth all understanding, it tastes the sweetness of grace and in some ways the eternal glory. These ecstasies of joy, these pleasures, which are tasted but which cannot be expressed, are not apt to be granted to people of the common run. They are reserved for the great saints, especially for those who have been trained in the trials we have just described and have felt the flame and heat of love. These are the ones who in holy consternation shout: He has returned! He has returned! He who brings my heart to me again!

Thus the sum and substance remains, that the reflex power of faith is not of the essence of faith and that, accordingly, there are very many believing and righteous souls who have not this direct, intense, and formal testimony of the Spirit. Therefore it is quite proper to sing:

*And tho it seems as if my God
Would leave me to my sorrow,
I'll cling to Him, my saving rod,
His work is always thoro.*

*Indeed, He may not come today;
But I will wait and hope and pray;
He'll come, maybe tomorrow.*

The prophet says: Who is among you that feareth Jehovah, that obeyeth the voice of His servant? He that walketh in darkness and hath no light, let him trust in the name of Jehovah and rely upon his God (Is. 50:10). And Jesus says: Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed (John 20:29).

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONTENTS

1. The duty of the highly favored, who frequently and amply enjoy the heavenly reflexion, to guard against indifference to sin.
2. Against spiritual haughtiness.
3. They should take care of their treasure.
4. They should practice spiritual silence, especially in the presence of the perverse and scoffing children of the world.

1. According to the arrangement of the subject matter we are now to take up the fourth question, namely, How a person is to act when he either receives or lacks this oft-mentioned heavenly reflection, as the case may be. Here we must again make a distinction between 1) those who enjoy this high grade frequently and abundantly, 2) those who enjoy it rarely and sparingly, and 3) those who cannot remember that they have ever enjoyed or experienced it.

As to those first mentioned, the unction will teach them all things, as the apostle says, and they are more learned than all their teachers; still they gladly accept reminders and admonitions. Their aim must be, above all things, to practise spiritual watchfulness and humility and to guard carefully against indifference to sin and against haughtiness.

They must not feel safe and drowsy, supposing that now there is enough of it, that now they are so

highly favored, that now their standing is so good in the sight of their heavenly Father that there is no cause for further worry about their salvation or their progress on the way to heaven. Oh, that would be a false and utterly untimely ease. False and wrong this is, for it is based on a divine gift of grace and not on God Himself. But furthermore it is also a sin against the First Commandment, for it puts the sublimest delight of the soul in a thing—be this thing ever so good, be it heavenly or earthly—without seeking God, the very highest good. It is fair to take great delight in such grace, to seek consolation in the sweet contemplation of it, to praise and thank God more for this than for all things temporal; but to lie down to rest upon it and exclusively depend upon it for salvation and worship it, as it were—that is diametrically contrary to the practice of true Christianity and the aim of God in granting such extraordinary grace. Therefore, as the angel, at his appearance, said to John, I am a fellow servant—worship God (Rev. 19:10), in the same manner these lofty messages of grace from God should remind His confidential friends: Do not worship it, guard against going to rest in security upon it, lie down to rest in the wounds of Jesus, they alone are safe, and outside of them there is no absolute security. Furthermore, it would be an entirely premature rest if a Christian were to stand still on account of his share in such sublime grace. This is only a small portion intended to be a help on the way, it is not the real end and aim. Paul must have made considerable progress in virtues as well as along God's heavenly ways of grace; but he

did not stand still on account of that, nor did he consider himself perfect, but he pressed on that he might lay hold on that for which he was laid hold on by Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:12). I urge you to do the same, blessed soul; shout always: Go ahead! If you have been refreshed for a moment under the shady palm trees of Elim, if the thirst of your parched, weary soul has been slaked at the cool fountains of salvation, do not get lazy and negligent, but thank God and, like the man from Ethiopia, go your way rejoicing. Make special efforts to train yourself in the direct faith, in love, in prayer, and in a blameless conduct; for this is more useful and more reliable than all joyous feelings.

2. Secondly, such a highly favored Christian must, above all things, keep a strict guard lest the devil of pride, posing as an angel of light, steal into his heart alongside the sublime grace, thus making a snare out of that which was intended to be of benefit and salvation. Paul was on the point of making an experience of this kind. He might have been exalted overmuch on account of the sublime revelations and the wonderful grace that he enjoyed if God had not graciously given him a preventive against haughtiness, a thorn in the flesh. Verily, Satan keeps no Sabbath, and he is not far away from you even when you are nearest to God. When it looks as tho he had shot away all his darts of temptation at you in vain, you must remember that you are still in battle, your enemy still keeps his most dangerous, his extreme distress dart, that is, to excite you to spiritual haughtiness and to contempt of others, whom you consider to be more feeble in faith

and grace, which may be true, but who are to be counted, together with you, among the children of God. See that you despise none of these little ones (Matt. 18:10). But if you are to quench this dart of haughtiness and conceit with the shield of faith, you must by no means bank on the experienced sweetness and the inward perception of grace, but persist in keeping your eye on the words of Paul: What hast thou that thou didst not receive (that is, undeservedly)? But if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it? If you perceive the riches of God's abounding goodness and grace, do not boast, but praise God, who gave you those riches. Not unto us, O Lord, but unto Thy name be glory! Be filled with wonderment, and humbly say in the words of David: What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? Confess, as Jacob did, that you are not worthy of the least of all the lovingkindnesses of God. And why? Because you are still living in the flesh. May this humble thought, this penitent reminder of your sinful misery, be a handicap and a weight on your soul when it is inclined to soar too high, and never become so ungrateful to God that it occurs to you to dream of any perfection in keeping the Law, thereby boasting of yourself in the face of the great God. He has shut up all things under sin, in order that He might show mercy to all by free grace. Therefore, you should know, as Paul did, that it does not do you any good to boast of yourself, but you should rather glory in your weaknesses; for you are indeed weak as long as you live in the flesh, tho you struggle against the flesh by the power of the Spirit and en-

joy some exalted, unusual gifts of grace which some others have not. Listen to the words of an old teacher on this point: Who has at any time reached such a degree of perfection and tasted and found another world? For until now I have never seen an absolutely perfect and free human being. But even if some one does attain to the best rest and assurance of grace, yea, is granted secrets and revelations and also the choicest savor and sweetness of grace, he still has inward sin in himself. But those who are so constituted as to believe that now they are free and perfect thru the immense grace of light which they have received, are yet mistaken, like inexperienced people, tho they have the power of grace. Until now I have seen no one who was quite free; for occasionally I have myself reached such a degree, and I have also learnt to know by experience that no human being is perfect (Macarius, Homil. 8).

3. Whoever is in the state of grace, let him have a care lest he fall and lose his treasure. Let him rejoice, but in fear and trembling; let him watch his five senses closely, in order that no sinful vanity, no dominating lust of the eye, lust of the flesh, or haughty mode of life may thru them steal into the soul and destroy the noble treasure, touch and roil the fountain running from the throne of the Lamb, or grieve the Spirit of grace and promise with which he was sealed. Yes, let him hold fast that which he has, that no one take his crown. Let him groan and say:

*O that this glorious Treasure lay
Forever at my bosom!*

*For that shall end my sore dismay
And fear that I may lose Him.
And till that hour I'll watch and wait
And soar on prayer's pinion.
At last I'll reach the golden gate
In spite of hell's dominion.*

4. Moreover, we shall quote still another reminder of the spiritual silence from A. H. Francke's sermon, *Vom Vorschmack des ewigen Lebens*: If you, dear friend, are refreshed by His love-kiss, it is your duty to keep quiet and not prattle foolishly about it, but rather thank God for His gift. For it may easily happen that while you are telling such things your heart may be puffed up thereby, or the name of your God and Jesus may be mocked and reviled. It is true that we should urge others to repentance, arouse them to strive after God's gifts of grace, and praise these in their hearing; but whatever we ourselves have really experienced in our innermost sacred fellowship with Christ, it is only fair that we should treat with cautiousness (Dom. VI, P. Epiph.). This reminder by Francke I gladly approve of with regard to the Christian life of our day, which is so stripped of faith and love. As the loving soul is surrounded by false and scoffing people who only ridicule everything, even the most serious matters, such a soul must resort to silence and secretiveness, saying with the bride: O that Thou wert as my brother, who sucked the breasts of my mother! When I should find Thee without I would kiss Thee; yea, and none would despise me (S. S. 8:1). The children of the world are brothers

of Ishmael, the mocker; if they hear a story that is unknown to them, if they perceive a work and emotion of the Spirit which is strange to them, they rail in matters whereof they are ignorant (2 Pet. 2:12). But if there were more experience and more love, behold, the children of God could also speak more confidentially about the secrets of the kingdom of God; and I do not doubt that if two, three, or more godly persons, in true humility and with an honest purpose, came together off and on in the name of Jesus for the purpose of speaking out frankly and conferring confidentially with each other regarding the condition of their hearts and the inward perception and experience of grace (as is done in secular matters, the knowledge of which people attempt to perfect by means of various accumulated experiences), all parties concerned would experience a great blessing, great enlightenment, and edification resulting therefrom.

CHAPTER NINE

CONTENTS

1. The condition of spiritually abandoned souls who may previously have had, but now for a long time have had no perceptible glimpse of grace.
2. The consolation in general.
3. Especially by considering God's stewardship.
4. Some splendid consolation from C. F. Richter's book: *Vom Adel und Ursprung der Seelen*.

1. But as we postulated in the previous chapter, only a very small number are frequently permitted to get a rich taste of the coming world, or off and on perceive a glimpse of the delicious reflex grace. Much larger is the number of those who most of the time complain that they are spiritually abandoned, walking about with seared and thirsty souls, and knowing more about longing than about obtaining, more of hungering and thirsting than of being filled. What is most painful to them is that the matter itself is not quite strange or unknown to them: In time past they have had this sweet sensation once or several times, and they thought they were worthy of this grace—if not daily and continually, rather frequently, off and on, at any rate. But for a long time, perhaps several years, no such abounding heavenly strengthening has been granted to them; on the contrary, their souls have become almost seared and empty. Like Jacob they have wrestled

with God and, like Jesus in Gethsemane, struggled earnestly and anxiously in prayer: but this was followed by little or nothing perceptible. No angel came to comfort them, no cup of salvation was offered to them. Of this lack of perceptible grace the souls complain not a little. According to the custom of Paul they would prove themselves whether they are in the faith, and when they fail to perceive the indwelling of Christ consolingly and perceptibly enough, as they wish, their troubled heart will occasionally come, in the hour of affliction, to the false conclusion that they have utterly fallen from grace and have been completely rejected of God. Or tho the assault of the affliction is not always and in all persons so strong that they become completely despondent, they are often engaged in dubious and melancholy thoughts, not knowing what is the matter with them or what their status is before God, in as much as He does not reveal Himself for the consolation of their souls nor visit them now and then inwardly by the Comforter permitting the Word of Grace to work powerfully in them.

2. This is the condition of the abandoned bride; she seems to be a widow, but her Friend is with her in the chamber without her knowing it. Behold, He says, I am with you all the days, even unto the end of the world. But not every day, not every month or year does He manifest Himself with consolation. It is my intention here to discuss the subject of spiritual affliction and the cross of the soul; for on this subject several books have already been written (among which Bishop Jersin's tract, *The Struggle and Victory of Faith*, is not the least important).

But for the consolation and instruction of those who, as stated above, only at long intervals, perhaps not for years, have experienced very little or nothing at all of the reflex power of faith, I wish to state at this point that provided their standing is good with regard to penitence, sincere intentions, a faithful longing for Christ, and a daily, tho frail equipment for the struggle of the Spirit against the flesh: then they have absolutely no sound reason for doubting the good condition of their souls. If at times doubt is thrown, and anxiety is driven into them, so that they must say with Zion: The Lord has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me, then they must assiduously and carefully resist such tempting thoughts, saying: Do you not understand that Satan's cunning only wishes that you should lose the consolation that Jesus gives thru faith?

When the evil hour is past and they properly reconsider the matter they might make use of the active and rational rest in faith which is described in the third part of this book; they might reflect on the condition of their heart, consider whether they fear God from the depth of their heart, love and honor Him, trust in Him, long for Him, cry to Him beseechingly, resist evil and earnestly wish to have the inward man strengthened, so that they may increase more and more in holiness. If it is found to be thus, then it is sufficient, the Holy Spirit must be taken to be present, witnessing directly and effectively of His presence and, accordingly, of their state of grace; for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God (Rom. 8:14).

What more does such a soul wish for? Maybe

this, that the Spirit would witness directly and formally, or more explicitly and distinctly, by speaking into the soul a perceptible, sweet consolation and shedding a strong, burning flame, by a decidedly high and divine exaltation of the mind so that it may look into the eternal joy. But this has a strong savor of selfishness: to lay undue claim to things which God has not necessarily promised anybody, things which do not necessarily belong to the way of salvation, but are unusual and are given only for certain reasons. As far as the wonderful ways of God are known from His Word and concurrent experience, God is in the habit of granting the decidedly bold faith to only a few souls, according to His inscrutable wisdom.

3. It occurs, in the first place, immediately in the beginning of their regeneration and conversion, and He does it for the purpose of putting courage into their poor hearts, so that they may not become despondent on account of the state of sin which they have just left, but rather know the riches of the grace of God and also be encouraged to continue their journey along the blessed ways of God. Em. Sonthom testifies to this in his *Golden Treasure*: I have seen such abounding consolation upon some sinners after their conversion that no heart is able to grasp it, nor could the hearts that receive it keep it in silence, so abundantly does the dew of heavenly goodness fall upon them from God's gracious hand. This is also set forth by Christ in the parable (Luke 15). Why was a costly banquet with music and the like provided for the Prodigal Son rather than for his brother, who had always been

an obedient son? Because he had just returned from his ways of dissipation. Here we may also apply the words of Christ: They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick (Matt. 9:12). The strong, grown children do not need the soft milk food, but those that are babes in Christ do. To such babes and beginning Christians He gives of the sweet milk of His consolation, not intending that they shall always remain so feeble and fastidious, but that they, in the course of time, may become accustomed to harder food: Like a gardener, to the plants just set out God applies a shower of heavenly grace; but this practice is kept up only until the trees are rooted and have become accustomed to the ground—unless the heat and drought of an unusually great tribulation should set in and induce Him to water even the big trees to prevent them from dying.

H. Müller, who has had a rich experience in spiritual things, says: God at times gives the newly converted only sugar, honey, and sweets, thereby coaxing them to Him—for as yet they are very feeble—and thereby making the sweet world bitter to them, and the bitter Christianity sweet. He permits the flame of divine love to burn in them, draws and coaxes their will by all kinds of sweet benefits, so that they learn to know His gracious will towards them, praise and magnify it. To the old Christians He gives old bread to eat, rarely gives them a taste of anything sweet, or He often gives them joy and grief, pleasure and pain alternately, in order that their inward man may learn to digest hard food and thereby grow and become strong in Christ. Da-

vid says that his soul is like a weaned child with his mother, by which he wants it understod that the consolation that he formerly felt is no longer so constant and powerful as it used to be. As the mother weans her child when it grows up to be more able and strong, God also takes the grown Christians away from His breast, leaves them without joy for a time, that they may learn to struggle against the severe temptations. It is only to the milk-faith of babes that God grants the perceptible taste of His sweetness and power, that it may grow and increase. Tauler says that our divine rest in faith is apt to occur in our early days of betrothal, after which such tender tokens of love usually cease for a time, until they finally, at the great wedding-feast of the Lamb, are truly renewed and increased a thousand times. And Francke, in his sermon on Easter Sunday, says, among other things: Yes, dear friend, do not let this seem strange to you, but know that it is thus pleasing to the good Lord Jesus to have you remain for a time without any perceptible consolation, in order that He may humble you and make you confess that it is His grace and that you shall not be hankering after such sweet emotions (Heavenly Love Kisses, C. 13).

Another occasion on which God is in the habit of sending the sweet, heavenly glimpses of grace is when He either wishes to prepare and strengthen a soul for impending bodily or spiritual afflictions, or when He wishes to refresh and recuperate it after severe suffering. Of the first kind there are many examples illustrating the divine stewardship, and with some of these I am personally acquainted. I

know a friend of God who told me confidentially that the exceedingly comforting glimpses of joy and grace which occasionally were granted him were generally forebodings of some approaching affliction, or that an offensive element was rarely lacking when this heavenly strengthening was perceived. We have an infinitely greater example in our Lord Jesus, who was strengthened by the angel in Gethsemane in order that His weak human nature might gather more courage and endure the battle against the severe suffering and against death. Besides, it is customary for the good God to visit some souls with a full measure and over-measure of His intensely sweet consolation for the purpose of cheering up their spirit, which the flesh has made sluggish, and of urging them forward on the way of Christian life. God knows best what the condition of each one requires. He applies different means to different persons; but He always has one aim in view: His honor and our salvation. What is accomplished in one by means of severity, cross, and compulsion, He performs in another by means of great love and goodness. He leads them by the bonds of love. I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart (Ps. 119:32). Especially does God use His wonderful grace to make some people disgusted with the joys and pleasures of the world, thereby strengthening them in their denial of the world. I know of an example of this kind which is just as reliable as it is remarkable. It happened not long ago that a certain good, pious Christian was urged by the example of his neighbors to indulge in the voluptuous joys and pleasures of the

world, and tho he immediately acknowledged the mistake and weakness of his soul and did not make the least concession to his desire against his conscience, the old Adam, nevertheless, groaned and whined somewhat after this manner: Behold, what a grouchy and provoking thing Christianity is, in many respects! No matter how you look at it, in *this* life the children of the world have a more pleasant time of it than the children of God have. What happened? In an instant God shed such a shower of abounding sweetness upon this soul (whose testimony is true) that for sheer joy it did not know whither to turn. He let the soul have a taste of something so precious, so pleasant and celestial that the whole world with all its joys and pleasures became disgusting to it. The dear God thereby said something like this: I do not let my children go away unrewarded. See and taste how sweet I am, then my yoke will be sweet, my burden light! Give up the world, here you have something better, a peace which the world cannot give!

But why do I tell this? For this purpose, beloved Christian, that to some extent you may learn to know the stewardship of God, and especially this: that the consoling, perceptible, and sweet assurance by the Holy Spirit is something all by itself and by no means common to all Christians at all times so that they, we might say, would have a right to demand it or to complain of its absence. For inasmuch as it is granted only at certain times, on certain occasions, and for certain purposes, it cannot really have any place in you unless God in His wisdom sees that your circumstances may require it.

When you were a babe in Christ, God put you, as a babe, into a baby carriage. He still remains with you and leads you, but in order that your faith may be trained He does not manifest Himself in so striking a manner. It may be that when you were younger and had a more tender, more sensitive, but less sin-polluted heart, you were more suitable for the reception of impressions made by the grace of God. And even now, when God has made your heart tender by an occasional grief and affliction, the consoling grace is apt to find its way into your heart to some extent. But the general rule is that such things are not given and hence are not enjoyed. If some persons have this experience often and regularly they should, nevertheless, consider it as an unusual grace, and they ought to acknowledge it with the greatest humility and thanks. But if this experience does not come to you for a long time, be contented still and let the grace of God be sufficient for you. Besides, you have enough for salvation, and much more than you could deserve. Therefore, be patient and wait for God; He may hide His face from you for a time; but sooner or later He will reveal Himself again and bring help at a time when help is needed.

4. C. F. Richter's booklet, *Vom Adel und Ursprung der Seelen*, is worthy of consideration:

To which the night of trial and temptation also adds its share, when the rays of the sun hide themselves from the soul, which for a time can not perceive their presence. For the soul, which now is inwardly endowed with faith and the power of God, is thereby established and advanced in what is good,

tho it does not seem so sweet and pleasant to the soul as when the vivid, sweet beams of its Lover shine upon it and make it feel warm. Therefore, do not fear tho the sun goes down and darkness covers the kingdom of the earth! Here we have His own words: It is expedient for you that I go away (John 16:7). Why are you so faint-hearted because you do not see its beauty and do not perceive its power and love? It will return and gladden your heart. Meanwhile, keep your soul in patience. Tho the night of faith be upon you, you are still resting in your mother's lap, and meanwhile she brings you heavenly power and bestows love upon you. Do not think in this way: It is impossible for me to endure this night! I will rise and seek my Lover, maybe I can find Him, so that He may chase away the night, which weighs so grievously upon me. Remain at rest within yourself, for now it is impossible to find the sun, and all your worry is in vain. This is the right way, and you need it for your new spiritual creature. Therefore, sleep on, and let your heart wake; for when day and night part, your Friend will come, His hair shall be full of the dew-drops of the night, then you shall see Him again and be firmer and stronger in your faith (P. 78, etc.). The same author: If you wish to believe properly you must be able to wait and be patient; for faith leads you along dark and deserted ways. The more the things that meet you inwardly and outwardly run counter to the promises of the Word of God, the more certain you may be that some divine glory is hidden underneath; and the greater the visible resistance, the more you must rejoice; for in as much as it is im-

possible for God to lie, it must surely indicate something peculiar. If you take the position that the struggle of faith will last to the end of your life, this will guard you against impatience even when there is no promise and things seem to go squarely against you (P. 296, etc.). The following was found in a letter of consolation written by the same author to an afflicted maiden. She is a child of God and an elect of the Most High; this word shall and must be apprehended by faith; it must be believed by her, not felt; but by and by, when the light of faith breaks thru the night and dawns in her soul, the sun will go forth as a bridegroom from his chamber, and she herself will confess that she was a child of God even at the time when the tempter said to her: You are not. If she perceives no sweet sensation after prayer, she must reason in this manner: It must be so; the hour of refreshing has not yet come, and I will gladly wait as long as Jesus wants me to. Several reasons why God interrupts and withholds the pleasures of consolation are also given by Müller in his *Love-Kisses*, C. 13. Afflicted souls and those who lament the lack of perceptible consolation may find encouragement in the first chapter of Charles Drelincourt's beautiful *Consolatory Meditations*.

CHAPTER TEN

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1. Of those who have never enjoyed the power of the reflex faith. They must examine themselves to find out whether they are really born again and converted.
2. If they are converted they must consider whether such reflection manifested itself in their hearts while they were young or at a later period.
3. Furthermore, those who are worried must be informed of the great difference of grades among those having such reflection.
4. Of its parts.
5. Of the persons.
6. Further consolation for the spiritually poor.
7. The reflex rest occurs very late in some persons, hence it is necessary to wait for it in patience.

1. According to our promise we thirdly come to the class of people who cannot remember that they have ever found in their souls the oft-mentioned heavenly reflection or the like. As an introduction to this main subject I can do no better than repeat the words formerly quoted from Lütke-*mann's* *Vorschmack Göttlicher Güte*:

Lütke-*mann*: If this account of a sweet refreshing of the Spirit is unknown to you, it is to be feared that you have not yet set your heart free from the world. And yet it may happen that even those, mark you well, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit find, nevertheless, that they are lacking this sublime

refreshing. Now, if your heart and your conscience tell you to cling to God, that you are sick of the world, and have a heartfelt longing for divine consolation, then do not worry even if you perceive no distinct sweetness; you know that this is not what constitutes Christianity.

That a sinner who as yet is unregenerate and unconverted knows nothing of the perceptible, sweet consolation, is no cause for wonderment. He who has nothing of the practice of the above mentioned direct faith, what knowledge should he have of the reflected light of grace and the perceptive power of faith? Indeed, the former may exist without the latter, but the latter cannot possibly exist without the former. Therefore, he who still clings to his obstinate, carnal mind, avoids all true penitence of heart, refuses to be renewed in his spirit, and, accordingly, does not seek any real fellowship with God—he must not be surprised if he knows absolutely nothing about the oft-mentioned reflection. For it is well known that wisdom will not enter into a soul that deviseth evil (Wis. 1:4). The disobedient Saul must not expect any revelation (1 Sam. 28:5, etc.). Saul feared (in a spirit of bondage, not of love) and questioned the Lord, but the Lord gave him no answer either in dreams or in revelations or by prophets. This was caused by his impenitence and unjust hate against David. For light and darkness, Christ and Belial cannot dwell together in one person. Intentional sin against one's conscience, no matter what sin it may be, must needs separate us from all fellowship of grace with God, and prevents the glory of Jehovah from rising upon us, the day-

spring from on high from visiting us. He that loves the darkness has no part in the light and does not apprehend it (John 1). When Jesus wished to manifest His glory in Cana it was said beforehand: Whatever He saith unto you, do it (John 2:5). To him that keeps His commandments, to him and to no one else will He manifest Himself (John 14). Far be it from us to think that penitence, faith, cleansing from dead works should as meritorious causes bring in their wake the exalted and secret perception of the grace of God. Oh, no; whatever God gives us is given undeservedly; between us and Him, no merits of our works are of any account. True penitence, however, must (according to God's ordinary economy) by all means precede as a condition without which the soul is not qualified to enjoy even the least, not to mention the higher gift of God's grace. When God wanted to manifest Himself to the Israelites they were previously ordered to wash their garments and be prepared (Ex. 19:10).

2. But when many children of God observe this and nevertheless complain bitterly of their spiritual wretchedness, scarcely perceiving even the least consolation in themselves, being ignorant of such a thing as a joyous ray of grace, doomed to a life of drudgery, of continuous thirsting and yearning; then such truly penitent, believing, and pious souls must be informed of the following grounds for consolation, which are apt to be of service to them.

In the first place it may be that many, many years ago, perhaps in early childhood, a soul perceived the sweet reflex power of faith without understanding

either the purpose or the nature and character of this rushing wind, and therefore, after such a long interval of time, it is almost forgotten. Let us assume that only a remembrance of it remains. Such a token of grace, tho received long ago, may yet bring continual consolation to a believing soul, especially if he has not meanwhile fallen from the covenant of grace thru some mortal sin; or even if this has happened a few times during such a long period, the covenant and pledge have been renewed by a true conversion and are still in full force. (I presuppose this in all particulars, and ask you to test yourself accordingly). The temple of Solomon was not filled every day with the glory of the Lord: but at the beginning it was dedicated thereby, and that had to suffice. A woman who is pregnant may not notice the new being at all for a long period after she felt its movements for the first time, but from other indications she knows that it is still alive, and she hopes that in due time it will see the light of this world. Similarly, the God who began the good work in us will perfect it until the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who brought forth the new man in us by the Word as a living and imperishable seed shall not let His work perish if we only believe and are obedient.

The thought may also occur to many a pious soul that it has never enjoyed the heavenly power, making the same mistake as the apostles did, who, tho they had seen the Father, were, nevertheless, anxiously longing to see Him (John 14:7, 8). Henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him, Jesus says. Philip saith unto Him: Lord, show us the Father,

and it sufficeth us. In order not to err in our self-examination, we must carefully observe what was briefly mentioned above, namely, that the reflex power of faith is not of one uniform kind, but is subject to great differences with regard to its various degrees, its parts, its subjects: the believing hearts in which it works.

3. Grace, says Paul, was given unto each one of us according to the measure of the gift of Christ (Eph. 4:7). This measure of the gift of Christ differs, not according to our worth, which is nothing before God, but according to the gracious will of God and His wise counsel, by which it is known what and how much is best for each one. All regenerate persons actually have the Spirit of God, and also some of the fruits of the spirit, tho quite unequally. Some may often perceive an exceedingly sweet joy welling up from the depth of their heart; like Paul, they abound in joy. Others can scarcely present their hearts before God and keep up a little joy in their conscience. In some persons the light of faith may rise, glorious and beaming, out of the inward man; others may see only a mere gleam of a burning flax. Some may often seem to be drunk with the good things of the house of God; others are scarcely permitted to taste a drop of the wine of joy or a crumb of bread from the Lord's table. Some may perceive a veritable rushing of the Spirit of grace, others scarcely a very slight breeze. Oh, how many degrees there are in this grace! One faith, one Spirit moves them all, but how the power varies!

4. The reflex power of faith is subject to another difference, namely, with regard to its essen-

tial parts and components, some of which predominate in one person, others in another person. Some persons prove to themselves the indwelling power of the Holy Ghost by the profound heavenly wisdom and inward enlightenment; others by their great, firm confidence and heroic courage; still others by the abounding sweet joy and peace of mind in God; furthermore, others by the strong inward yearning and attraction for God, and, finally, others by the fervent tears of penitence and love which they shed at the feet of Jesus. The dear Francke no doubt aims at this in his beautiful sermon: *Vom Vorschmack des ewigen Lebens*: But we do not venture to think that it always takes place under the same conditions as it did at that time. It was an example of Peter, James, and John enjoying, each one by himself and in his own way, a foretaste of life eternal. But in a thousand different ways our God and Lord can grant His children a taste of eternal life, and He is not tied down to one method or another. But we can see from this example what the foretaste of eternal life always consists in. It is said here: He was transfigured before them, and His transfiguration is described thus: His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as the light. And Mark uses these words: His garments became glistering, exceeding white, so as no fuller on earth can whiten them (Mark 9:3). Luke likewise: His countenance was altered, and His raiment became white and dazzling. What happened here in a vision before the eyes of the disciples is apt to appear inwardly, before the eyes of faith. In the same manner the spiritual transfiguration of

Christ takes place in us when, by the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, we attain to the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6). The foretaste of eternal life is of such nature that in a certain way all believers can enjoy it. For instance: We may all come to a living knowledge of the Lord Jesus, in which knowledge there is also eternal life (John 17). Now, these and similar gifts we should all strive after. But there are also other and extraordinary gifts which belong to the foretaste but which God our Lord has not given to all believers, as Paul says: Are all workers of miracles? Have all gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? (1 Cor. 12: 29, 30; Dom. 6, P. Epiph.).

5. Therefore there remains a third difference to be noticed, namely, with regard to the persons or the believing hearts, especially as to the reassuring, sweet boldness, which properly is the main element of the reflex faith that we are discussing. Tho the Holy Spirit, being a free Spirit, bloweth where He listeth and performeth His spiritual work quite freely and without accommodating Himself to the conditions of our bodies, yet experience can tell us that somehow it pleases Him to adapt Himself to the temperament that He meets with. Many a melancholiac, for instance, by nature is scarcely susceptible of any joy. But it is not safe to build anything on such a nature foundation. For it happens to many a melancholiac that the greater his anguish in the hour of affliction, in comparison with that of others, the loftier will be his exaltation to the divine delight and power when the light of joy shines forth; tho such

unusual refreshing does not endure long, as we have pointed out before. Furthermore, it must be noted that such abounding boldness of faith is common to those who have to pass thru bodily or spiritual afflictions. For sick people not only need a remedy in general, but they need a remedy that corresponds to their sickness. Paul has this in mind when he says: As the sufferings of Christ abound unto us, even so our comfort also aboundeth thru Christ (2 Cor. 1:5). The martyrs of the early Church no doubt experienced a more powerful outpouring of God's love and of the oil of gladness in their hearts than do the Christians of our day; and among these there is a mighty difference in this respect, so that one cannot go by another.

6. Supposing that I put all of this aside, there still remains enough consolation for such really penitent, poor, and hungry souls who can scarcely declare that they have been refreshed, not to mention such things as being filled or spiritually drunk. As I have amply demonstrated in the above chapters by numerous testimonies and otherwise, the justifying and saving faith does not by any means consist in any reflex, sweet power or feeling, but exclusively in a direct refuge of the penitent heart in Christ, the Savior of the world, there may or may not follow a reflex power, according to the will of God. We have already used so many testimonies on this point that now I shall quote only what the dear Scriver says in his Treasury of the Soul: It cannot be denied that true godliness is, as a rule, associated with an intense heavenly joy and taste of the love of God, so that he who has neither experienced any such in-

ward spiritual joy nor has ever felt any longing for it, rather looking upon such things as something unknown and of small value, thereby makes it perfectly plain what sort of a Christian he is, and that so far he does not know anything about the inward and real union and fellowship with Christ. But it is equally certain—and this fact should be stressed—that not every upright Christian perceives such joy in his heart at all times and in all degrees, and that his godliness should not be considered worthless because this experience is lacking (P. III, Sermon 2, Par. 29, 30). The same work: The love of God must not be judged by the sweet emotion felt in the heart, by the tears of joy, by great devotion and such delectable inward things; for love can exist and persist without all such things (12:30).—One more point I have to mention: the grace of God as a general cause must not be taken for divine consolation as a special effect. For a long time God may withhold the perceptible consolation, but never grace itself (Is. 54:10; 49:15). Grace is upon all those who fear the Lord whether they perceive it or not. It is impossible to love God and yearn for Him in faith without perceiving it (except in the hour of temptation, when everything that is white looks black before the eye of the inward man). But to be loved of God without feeling it in the heart and without perceiving God's love and truth, is possible and, in the case of many children of God, very common.

7. Moreover, such yearning souls should, in their disconsolate condition, be reminded that while God's dispensation of the sweet reflex sensation of faith varies radically as to persons, parts, and de-

grees, it also varies with regard to the times and years of a person; hence a believer may expect and hope that some time in the future he shall, according to the will of God, enjoy an experience which for some reason has been withheld from him for so long a time. It may happen that this wonderful, this abounding boldness of faith is granted to some in their earliest childhood, as in the case of the well-known and pious child, Christian Gottlieb Lebrecht von Exter of Zerbst, about whom we have a special treatise which is certified by the Prince of Anhalt. To others it may occur in the bloom of youth, as in the case of the above mentioned Theodor a Brakel. To others, again, it may come in the prime of manhood, an instance of this kind being the famous J. Tauler (See his biography). And it should be noted in particular that to some persons it does not come until the very hour of death, or shortly before. An instance of this kind is Janneway, the English clergyman mentioned above; and also a certain Italian lady of noble birth, Olympia Fulvia Morata, who during her whole life was not only a perfect stranger to such things as perceptible assurance and light of grace, but who also had to labor under dire afflictions; but on her deathbed she said: Now I am perfectly happy, and in my heart I find nothing but rest and peace in Christ. When death began to dim her eyes she said: You who are around me here I shall soon know no more; but otherwise everything seems to be strewn with the loveliest lilies, etc. (Vid. Opusc. Olymp. a Cael. ed. Basileæ, 1580, P. 189).

Therefore, as long as the promise waits, we shall

wait for it. If God finds that we are faithful servants in managing what He has confided to us, He will in due time, sooner or later, consider our souls worthy of enjoying a higher reflex power of faith. This is corroborated by many teachers. J. Arndt says: In due time God will let you meet with the perceptible, cheerful consolation, tho He may for a while leave it hidden in your heart (1 B. c. 5). P. du Moulin: As long as God grants us the grace of loving Him and depending upon Him, it is best for us to be content with His grace, for His strength is made perfect in our weakness. It is impossible that love and faith should bring no joy, no consolation in their wake. It may not come so quickly, but it is coming. Let us wait for it in hope and patience, without hindering and checking it by our rashness (*Paix de l'Ame*, L. V. c. 5). Charles Drelincourt: The rejected care but little for the perception of God's grace. But to those who worry the most, God sooner or later gives more vivid assurances of their salvation, and before their death a foretaste of life eternal (*Visites Charitables*, P. 1, G. 3). Teachers of the past, especially Macarius and Tauler, have given us similar testimonies, which were quoted (Chapter VI) on another occasion, but which we find it expedient to repeat in part. Macarius says to a person who is spiritually hungry and knows nothing of perceptible grace: When the separation of your soul and your body is approaching, be sure to persist in the struggle, hold fast the promises, etc.: then I tell you that you shall take leave with joy, be perfectly bold, be revealed worthy of taking the kingdom (*Lib. IV, Hom. 8*). Tauler

says on Matt. 8:1-13: One might say: What will happen at last to people who live in such ignorance (about the condition of their souls) but nevertheless surrender themselves to God in true humility? Answer: When the desired day comes on which God sets them free from this vale of tears and carries them into His Kingdom, then, at the very moment when they depart from this world, He delivers them from all their ignorance and permits them to know quite abundantly how fatherly and good His intentions have always been in His dealings with them, He comforts them lovingly, and in place of all their tribulations He often gives them a taste of the eternal bliss which is to come, etc. But even if this reflex rest is absolutely lacking (of which there are but very few instances), the believer is yet saved and can test the sincerity of his faith by its general characteristics and fruits and be convinced thereby in spite of a total lack of feeling and perception (of grace). From all of this a soul that is worried about its faith may come to the correct conclusion that if the penitent heart is exercising the direct faith and with a heartfelt longing flees and comes to Jesus, the Savior of the world, its faith, no matter how feeble it may be, is of the right kind and has everything that Jesus demands, and such a soul will not be cast out by Him: Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out (John 6:37). And: Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved (Acts 2:21; Dom. 3 p. Epiph.).

It is true that the oft-mentioned reflex rest gives a trustier assurance and a more powerful testimony in the depth of the heart when it is there. But even

without this we must know enough to turn our hearts to God, pleading the sincerity of our hearts, our conscience, which is cleansed from dead works by the blood of Jesus; and tho we may enjoy no exalted and glorious joy in the soul, we may yet say with Job: My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live (Job 27:6). We have peace with God thru our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1). If our heart condemn us not, we have boldness toward God; and if our heart condemn us (in the hour of affliction), God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things (1 John 3:21, 20),

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CONTENTS

1. Tho it is not absolutely necessary, as we have said before, that the reflex rest should be found in all believers, it should, nevertheless, by no means be slighted; nor should its nurture be neglected when it pleases God to send it.
2. The best expedient for accomplishing this is, according to the will of God, a more exalted cleansing of the heart.
3. We must earnestly pray God to grant us this.
4. Use the Word and the Sacraments as the proper means of grace.
5. Be diligent in the practice of singing devotion.
6. By meditation we should, above everything else, enter with our heart into the sweet evangelical grace and the love of God.

1. We can plainly see from the above that the reflex power of faith is not necessarily found in all believers; but from this we must by no means conclude that we dare belittle this exalted degree of grace or neglect whatever may, according to the will of God, serve as a means of attaining to it. For does not Paul say: Desire earnestly the greater gifts (1 Cor. 12:31)? Our dear Lord has also commanded His disciples to pray: Thy kingdom come. Now that the kingdom of God, according to Paul, is not only righteousness and peace but also joy in the Holy Spirit, we must patiently aim at this in our daily prayers. It is this glorious aim which Paul praises in writing to his brethren and which he

also wishes for them (Rom. 15:13; Eph. 1:17-19; 3:16; Col. 1:9-12; 2 Thess. 1:11; Phil. 1:9; Philem. 6). And this he does not do as tho it were the beginning of the work of salvation in their souls; for they were already justified thru the direct faith; but, as he himself explains, the aim of such a wish is that by the sweet reflex power of faith they may the better learn to know the goodness of God, to thank Him the more, to gain the more strength for the inward man to struggle against evil, and to have a more ample hope of their salvation. Now, who among us can say that the same reason does not apply to him? Who would not have a feast with our Lord Jesus? Who would not give the more diligence to make his calling and election sure? The election does indeed remain immovable under God's own seal, and tho mountains and hills pass away He will not withdraw His grace from those whom He elected before the foundation of the world. It is quite impossible that the elect should be led astray and lost (Matt. 25). But on account of our weakness and for greater assurance in this life, we must use all diligence to make our calling and election sure. For this purpose I think the direct inward witness of the Holy Spirit, or the reflex power of faith, is by far the most profitable; therefore it is indeed worth while to make efforts to attain to and enjoy, if it please God, the perceptible foretaste of heaven even here on earth. For this purpose it is most profitable:

2. First, we must by the aid of God perform a more careful and thoro heart-cleansing than we perhaps have done before. God did not give to the

people of Israel a taste of the delicious manna until the Egyptian meal was all used up; likewise He will not send you the heavenly consolation from above until you, as far as possible, have given up the loose thoughts and sinful lusts. Moses fled out of Egypt into the land of Midian before God revealed Himself to him; likewise your soul must flee from worldly vanities before it can expect this consolation. Many well-disposed but particularly weak souls have really turned to God in an upright manner, having become, from the depth of their heart, enemies of all sin, having put an end to all fellowship with the unfruitful, dead works of darkness, yes, having turned in painful longing to Jesus, the Savior of the world. But there still remains one drawback: on account of their official positions, their social standing, and other external circumstances they busy themselves rather too much with the affairs of this world; they do not let the dead bury their dead, and often they are thrown rather too far into the useless tumult of this world, so that their souls do not remain so tranquil as they ought to be. This is a great hindrance to the growth of the inner man; for if the Holy Spirit is to be heard by us thru His consoling grace there must, above everything else, be stillness in the depth of our heart. As the sun cannot impress a correct image of itself upon the water until the storm is past, likewise the reflex rays of grace from the Sun of Righteousness cannot properly settle and impress themselves upon our heart until its depth is calm and free and is open to God alone. Augustine says: O dear Lord, I will make an agreement with Thee that I will quite die in myself in order

that Thou mayest live in me; I will keep silence in myself that Thou mayest speak in me; I will also keep myself at rest that Thou mayest work in me. Thus the restless world must be hed aside together with its useless affairs.*

The vain world with its voluptuous pleasures must be abandoned. Away with the pipers and the noise of the crowd if Jesus is to show us a sign and a glimpse of grace. Therefore, you who demand of God an exalted token of His secret friendship, shun not only all vain joy itself but also everything leading to it, such as bad company, useless talk and joking and tomfoolery, which, according to the words of Paul, do not befit Christians—idleness, dancing after the manner of the world, gambling, boisterousness. For God can easily cheer you up and gladden you without using such miserable means. When the reins are given to the flesh, the Spirit is killed, the inward work is checked, the little spark that has been kindled is put out so that there is no flame coming.

3. Secondly, prayer is a means of making headway in this exercise, Jesus Himself having taught us to sigh: Thy Kingdom come. Our heavenly Father surely wants us to ask Him for this grace in a childlike spirit. If I were to ask one who has experienced little or nothing of this profound mys-

* This does not by any means signify that one who finds himself placed of God in a calling and position which gives him more business worry than he might wish for, should for that very reason give up such calling and position. On the contrary, it would seem that due obedience to God and love to our neighbor would require us to remain patiently under our burden until God Himself may take it away. As long as upright souls remain in the bustle connected with the business of their calling which they do not dare to shirk in wilfulness, God will grant them the necessary grace and strength, that they may remain in power without neglecting the one thing needful.

tery: Have you ever entreated God urgently and earnestly to grant you this grace? Have you, like Jacob, wrestled with God in prayer for it? The chances are that he should have to confess that he had hardly thought of it, not to mention such a thing as energetically beseeching God to grant it to him. James says: Ye have not, because ye ask not (James 4:2). And the Savior Himself: Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be made full (John 16:24). In Luke the same profoundly kind-hearted Jesus promises that His heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him (Luke 11:13). And here we must take the Holy Spirit to mean simply the more powerful and perceptible work of the Holy Spirit. For as a matter of fact they must have had the Spirit before they could pray. The most opportune occasion for praying for this is during bodily or spiritual affliction, under the stress of adversity and grief, for then the consoling and assuring grace is most gladly accepted. But the inclinations of most of us human beings are such that in our sufferings we welter in worry, look to the right and to the left in search of human consolation, and, in keeping with the impatience of our pampered nature, we try to calm our anguish, the sooner the better. But at the same time we often forfeit the heavenly consolation which might have visited us in the profoundest depth of our soul if we had curbed our impatience and kept still before the Lord; for He rarely cares for assistants in His work, in order that He alone may have the honor. Oh, that many could thoroly understand the mystery of the

cross and make use of it, as the intention of God is, for then they would surely experience much more. But whether you ask our heavenly Father for such inward strengthening inside or outside of the cross, remember and make a thoro test of what Müller says in his Love-Kisses: During prayer you must watch your thoughts closely: If and how and to what the Holy Spirit may lead you. If you notice that your heart is moved, drop the words in the prayer and follow your thoughts further on. If you cleave to the words and permit the emotion to rush past you, then you are like those who gather the shells and husks and let the grain and kernels go. Do not quench the Spirit and its emotions, but fan the little spark more and more with many sighs; make no resistance, but keep your thoughts continually in the path along which the Spirit leads you. Above all, when you notice some grief, don't break away from it, but keep still and know that God thru grief prepares a joy for you (C. 13).

4. The third means of promoting the growth of grace is known to be earnest meditation on the Word of God and a devout use of the Holy Sacrament. The word of faith carefully masticated in the mouth of faith makes the inner man strong and robust. According to the command of Christ, we are to work for the meat which endureth and which, tho imperceptibly, gives strength. When Jesus wished to increase the knowledge of the disciples going to Emmaus and at last to show them His transfigured and glorified body, He first made use of Holy Writ, beginning from Moses (Luke 24). Likewise, when the holy apostles preached the Scrip-

tures, the Holy Spirit fell on their hearers (Acts 10). When we diligently and persistently peruse the very reliable prophetic Word, the blessed day-star will at last arise in the heart (2 Peter 1:19). And as soon as the day-star arises in us, man is immediately made to understand the exalted gifts. The Holy Sacrament, which is truly the essential body and blood of Christ, also contributes materially to this. For it is recognized as a chief means of spiritual enlightenment, strengthening and refreshing the inner man, provided it is used worthily, diligently, and prayerfully. I do not doubt but that many souls must confess, to the glory and praise of their Jesus, that by receiving and while receiving His body and blood they have perceived in their inmost powers a great strengthening and multitudinous emotions.

5. Among these means must also be mentioned, fourthly, the singing devotion, which makes use of beautiful spiritual hymns on such subjects as: The Praise of God, the Love of Jesus, Union with Him, Joy in the Holy Spirit, the Eternal Life Which Is to Come, etc. Of this singing devotion we may fittingly say:

*When I am plunged in painful grief,
My song and prayer bring swift relief;
The Holy Spirit makes me sure
The grace of God shall e'er endure.*

Singing may be looked upon as double prayer, partly because the slow pronunciation of the words leaves more time for reflecting on them, partly because the sweet melody has a mysterious power to move the heart and kindle devotion.

6. Furthermore, in this connection special mention must be made of meditation, or a quiet contemplation of God's manifold benefits conferred upon all men in general and a few in particular, as is best known to each individual. Of very high rank is meditation on the blissful Gospel about Jesus Christ, which has saved our miserable souls. One of the chief reasons why people taste so little of the divine inward joy is that they often pay more attention to the Law than to the Gospel. (I do not speak of the unconverted, who have nothing to do with the consolation of the Gospel, but still remain under the Law and wrath, until they by means of penitence and faith may attain to the freedom of the Gospel). But we are called evangelical Christians because we should live in the Gospel as in our proper element. Like the birds in the air and the fish in the water, our souls should by each breath, so to speak, inhale God's love and kindness from the Gospel and swim about, as it were, in the boundless ocean of divine mercy which is opened to us in the Glad Tidings of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. Verily, our heart ought to force its way to the power of a truly divine joy; if we sincerely took the Gospel to heart and permitted it to pervade all our powers, if we pondered it night and day, if we awoke and went to sleep with it, if we performed our work with it, and dipped our morsel in it, if our coming in and going out were thus arranged, it would surely prove its true power upon us. Indeed, a devout contemplation of the everlasting heavenly joy in beholding the face of God must, I suppose, have the same effect. Heaven is a veritable jubilee hall; and he

who can impress an image thereof in his heart must needs be comforted thereby. What made Stephen so bold when they saw his face as it had been the face of an angel? Luke says: He saw the heavens opened (Acts 7:56). To this holy martyr must have been granted extraordinary grace to endure and be patient by means of a vision of this kind; but you may be sure, my dear Christian, that if you in your devotion attempt to enter the kingdom of heaven by violence, you may also (when God finds that it is good and profitable) break thru the clouds and get a glimpse of the jubilee hall where Jesus sitteth at the right hand of the Father. In short, let the deep and calm meditation of your heart dwell on the works of God or on the perfection and supreme bliss of His being, etc. All this becomes a ladder to heaven by which we mount up to God, and God again descends to us, as it were. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you (James 4:8). God is a light, His love a fire. If we raise our heart in meditation up to this fire, our heart will be warmed by love, and from the light there may fall a flame down upon the smoking flax of our faith and kindle it. I mean that during such fervent meditations some strong flashes of grace, some unusual beams of joy often fall upon the soul and seem to shake and move and permeate its profoundest depths, besides giving a strong assurance that the prayer has been heard and the faith is accepted which turns directly to Christ and moves Him so perceptibly that a power issues from Him, that a reflection from His glory returns with brightness and beams of light in the soul.

CHAPTER TWELVE

CONTENTS

1. He who has observed all this without having enjoyed the desired grace must humbly blame himself and his own unworthiness and patiently wait for God's season and hour.
2. He must not dictate anything to God, but think that even in poverty of spirit he is pleasing to God.
3. He must not stubbornly and impetuously demand anything from our generous God.
4. As a conclusion of the Second Part we quote a letter from Philip Melanchthon to Joachim Camerarius.

1. If some one should say: I have taken up and used the means recommended, but so far it has not resulted in the highly praised wonders which God is to work in the soul, then I say: Dear man, such an exalted gift is so valuable that it is worth while to ask for it for some length of time, as the farmer patiently waits for the time when he can reap the precious fruit of the earth. Consider also whether you have ever grieved the Holy Spirit and been a truant from His school, as it were, so that when He intended to begin and finish His work of grace in you, you withdrew from Him, checking and repressing His good inspiration. If the captain of a ship wilfully neglected to make use of a favorable wind it would not be unfair to him if he were compelled to wait a while for a good wind, meanwhile spreading his sails in vain. Similarly, no injustice

is done to you if you have to wait a while for the grace which you perhaps ignored when it was offered to you in time past. Therefore, let your soul quietly wait for the Lord as the watchmen wait for the morning (Ps. 130:5, 6). Say something like this:

*And if it last from early morn
Until the coming night,
By doubts my soul shall not be torn,
For God makes all things right.*

Think of the words of Habakkuk: For the vision is yet for the appointed time, and it hasteth toward the end, and shall not lie; tho it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay (Hab. 2:3). And the words of Sirach: If he (man) trust her (wisdom) he shall inherit her; and his generations shall have her in possession. For at the first she will walk with him in crooked ways, and will bring fear and dread upon him, and torment him with her discipline, until she may trust his soul, and try him by her judgments: then will she return again the straight way unto him, and will gladden him, and reveal to him her secrets. If he go astray, she will forsake him (Ecclus. 4:16-19). Now, wait until the hour of Jesus comes, and say:

*Tho my faith be faint and yearneth,
I will trust Him till He turneth
To my soul His kindly face;
Till my Bridegroom shall embrace me,
With His ardent kisses grace me,
I will humbly run my race.*

2. By the way, my dear Christian, you have absolutely no reason for assuming an attitude of impatience and dissatisfaction or for quarreling with God, as it were, if He should consider it wise to withhold from you, even until your death, the reflex power of faith and the sweet and warm beams of His love: He does no such thing without a cause, and knows better than you whether such things would be good for you, whether you would be strong enough to stand it. No matter what people may say, such exalted works of grace must be sought with great devotion and self-denial. They are not produced by compulsion or untimely worry, and they are not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that hath mercy. He does not adorn all the spiritual members of His body with just one kind of ornament, but He is fond of them all as long as they cling to Him in simple faith and love. Tauler says: When I wished to please my friend and I noticed that I could please him better in a coarse blouse than in an ornamental garment, the coarse one would be most pleasing to me. And Müller says: We are most pleasing to God when we, in the profoundest humility, consider ourselves unworthy of such divine revelation, and leave it to Him to decide as to whether He is going to carry us thru roses or thru thorns, whether He is going to adorn us with pleasure or with suffering. When a person has advanced so far that he is satisfied with God in all kinds of conditions, then he has reached a decidedly high position in his Christianity, and he is better off than if he had a thousand sweet

glimpses of God's grace every day (Love Kisses, C. 13).

3. In short, we must be content with the grace of God and submit to all kinds of want, affliction, and spiritual poverty. On our part we must neglect no means of attaining to a higher degree of grace, if it please God to grant it to us. But when we have done our share, we must be heartily satisfied with the little fortune that God has given us, and not repine because we cannot have what God does not want to give us; for this would be as tho one who is anxious to fly should worry because he has no wings. It takes no small amount of impudence for us to propose to choose our own way, supposing that this will bring us greater success, instead of leaving that matter to God, who surely knows what is best for us. Not in vain has our dear Savior taught us to pray: Father—Thy kingdom come, and then immediately afterwards: Thy will be done. God's will is much safer and better than all our notions, and when we humans pray we are often unable to tell what we are really asking for, even in spiritual things. The gifted Johann Staupitz, a confidential friend of Luther, says something on this point which is worth considering: While praying (impetuously), do not ask to be permitted to feel God's love in some way, but simply pray Him to act according to His own good will. In a mental attitude of this kind a person always receives consolation from God's love no matter how he perceives it. But those who cannot be contented except in the higher degrees and cannot believe that God is with them unless they perceive the sweetness of love or at least the assurance of the Spirit—such

persons have absolutely no lasting consolation on earth In as much as our love flows from God's love alone, it often happens that we deprive ourselves of its taste and sweetness by seeking for it with impetuous vehemence (A booklet on God's Love). Here belongs what A. H. Francke says in a sermon: But when we ask for something unusual in our prayers, especially such gifts as great sweetness, taste, and sensation, it is so easy for natural haughtiness and obstinacy to creep in, yes, even for Satan himself, posing as an angel of light in order to harm us; and this may happen the more easily when a person is not submissive but tries to compel God by main force, as it were, to give him what he asks for in his prayers, while God in His wisdom knows better what is useful and good for us (Serm. on 6th Sunday after Epiph.).

4. By way of concluding the discussion of this matter I can do no better than quote from a letter which makes very valuable reading. It was written in March, 1525, by Philip Melancthon to Joachim Camerarius, and is found among the complete collection of his printed letters: It seems to me that you must be carrying on a very unusual combat and struggle with yourself, and that there is great religious anxiety in your mind. This grieves me very much indeed; but still I content myself, firmly believing that I must not interpret your struggle as anything but a new beginning and preparation for greater godliness and an obvious token of the piety that is in you, and that God has put you into this school of affliction in order that you may pass thru your trial. Now, in making investigations to as-

certain whether such mental emotions in you are only natural or are inspired of God, and in thus seeking for greater assurance regarding divine inspiration and in-dwelling, instead of abiding by a mere illusion after the manner of many that are known as enthusiasts,—you must see that your soul remain truly firm and that you surrender yourself to the will of God, even if He does not immediately give you what you wish for. I believe that not only now, but also in former ages, at the beginning of the Church, a countless number of people fell away from religion simply because they could not immediately have a rich taste of heavenly gifts which they, certainly not without foundation in truth, were sure of finding in religion. At any rate, the disputes of Porphyrius largely sustain this assumption. There is surely much to write to you about under these circumstances; but this time suffice it to say that a person is not apt to observe any truly perceptible, certain consolation which is really given of God unless he is in great distress and in veritable anguish of heart. But this is the necessary way of Christianity. For Christ reveals Himself at the cross, and I firmly believe that if God treated us differently, giving us a taste of His consolation even in good days and at all hours, we would misuse such a gift. But when He reserves this especially for periods of suffering, we can use it more economically. Therefore, my opinion is this: It is better to wait with a humble heart until God benefits us than to run into His way and prescribe to Him how and what blessings He ought to confer upon us. Not to mention that when we want them immediately, our minds and our

intentions are simply carnal. We are inclined to seek what we like, not in order to please God thereby but only in order that we may live pleasantly and agreeably and be at ease, and this refers to a multitude of things. For this reason I advise you not to engage in much wrangling about God's counsel with regard to you, but enjoy with a thankful and pious heart the good things that God grants you, cheerfully performing the duties of your office. Moreover, let Him do that which seemeth Him good, as Joab said to his brother (2 Sam. 10:12). For no matter how long you keep on discussing, you accomplish nothing excepting that your temper is aroused to hostility against the judgments of God, and this is a sin than which none is greater in the world. This is what Paul means when he says that the Law worketh wrath, and therefore he urges us in many places, but especially in Rom. 12:12, to be rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, and stedfast in prayer. Will you, then, my dear Joachim, say: The heavenly Father does not care for you or does not know anything about you? How do you happen to think this way? Maybe you suppose that you have a reason to do so because your heart has not yet felt any of His goodness? But ask yourself whence it comes—perhaps it is your own fault that this light of the soul still remains invisible to you? The worry that you give yourself and the disputing that you practice surely cause such dark clouds: But according to God's counsel and will the light will sooner or later break forth thru the darkness and appear in its perfect splendor (Fol. 627, Edit. Lond.).

*Yield not to fear and dire dismay,
Ye shy and tender souls, when sin's dread night has
vanished*

*And darkness by the light of faith is wholly ban-
ished—*

*Because you do not of a sudden find the way
Where confidence grows strong
And fills the soul with song
In children of the light at every time and place.*

*Be calm; rest humbly in your Savior's wondrous
grace;
For He who brought the light of faith into your
mind*

*Will, as the days and nights are passing,
Be generous to you by massing
On you salvation's pledges rich and kind,
With strength and power for your heav'nly exercises,
Until the radiant noonday sheen
Has guided you till day and night have vanished
And every sin and sorrow has been banished
And you shall live in joy where God Himself is seen.*

*Ye tender souls, march on, and never look behind
you;*

*With holy valor fight your battles; never yield;
In heaven you'll be free, and nothing shall confine
you;*

And in that kingdom God will be your sun and shield.

End of Second Part

THIRD PART

CHAPTER ONE

CONTENTS

1. A rational test of faith in general.
2. The assistance of the Holy Spirit needed for this purpose.
3. Short meditation and test of the essence of faith.
4. Likewise its fruits.

1. Now I trust that I have somewhat plainly discussed the subject of the passive reflection or power of faith which reflects on itself and in a divinely sweet light and boldness perceives itself, and that all of its parts and attributes have been considered.

But since all this, as I have amply demonstrated, is not common to all true believers, but something that belongs especially to those who have a strong faith or are highly favored, at least in view of this sensation being so marked as to bring a perceptible assurance of the grace of God; behold, then another question follows: What are those Christians to go by who have had no share in the heavenly reflection but who are heartily craving for a certain assurance of their state of grace? Answer: It is fair to refer such souls to the test which is founded on

reasonable reflection,* which has already been mentioned and briefly discussed, but was dropped in order to be put here, where it properly belongs according to the arrangement of the subject matter. Now, then, said reflex faith is a rational consideration and meditation made by the soul in itself and on its own spiritual condition. This is the dokimasia, the test which Paul recommends to the Corinthians: Try your own selves, whether ye are in the faith; prove your own selves. Or know ye not as to your own selves? (2 Cor. 13:5.) Especially before going to the Lord's Supper: Each one is to prove himself, that is, consider his condition intelligently, go into his heart and see how it is fundamentally disposed, whether it harbors belief or unbelief, sin or righteousness, Christ or Belial (1 Cor. 11:28). It is our spirit bearing witness that we are children of God (Rom. 8:16). It is the knowledge and experience of our own spirit with regard to what is in us (1 Cor. 2:11).

2. But in order not to be mistaken in this search and this self-examination and thus be deceived forever, we must seek good advice and proceed very cautiously. First, because our selfishness, which has

* The supernatural rest in faith is contrasted with the one based on rational reflection, which, however, in reality is not natural. Since the natural is wholly excluded from the entire rule of salvation, we must by no means think of the rest in faith which is founded on natural reflection as something purely natural. As faith itself is a work of God in us, so is also the assurance of our faith. It is true that the believer takes a part in the testing of his faith; not by means of his natural powers, however, but by means of those given by the Holy Spirit thru regeneration. Said rest in faith, therefore, is nothing natural, except in so far as rational reflection is a power given to man by nature. Moreover we know that the natural understanding, left to itself, does not discern what belongs to the kingdom of God.

such deep roots in us (which has caused the heart of man to be called deceitful and exceedingly corrupt, Jer. 17:9), hinders the soul very much when the latter tries to pass an impartial judgment on its own condition. Secondly, because the new man, or the divine and the good that may be found in our soul, cannot be made manifest before the eye of the sanctified understanding except in God's own light. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him, and he cannot know them. Therefore we have received the Spirit of God that we may know the things that are given us of God. The one who wishes to try himself must earnestly appeal to this Spirit and ask for His guidance and control. And the Word of God must be at hand, which is a light and a rule to go by for all those who do not wish to be deceived.

3. What has been said is sufficient for educated people. But for the benefit of plain people I add a sketch as a test of faith: 1) as to its nature; 2) as to its works and fruits. Now, if you take up this matter to find out whether faith is essentially present in you, then search your heart with calmness and close attention:

I. Whether you know and recognize a triune God with whom you have made a covenant in Holy Baptism, according to His nature and according to His will, as He has revealed Himself in His Word by the holy prophets and apostles, of which your catechism contains correct account, which is brief but sufficient unto salvation.

II. That you (except when assaulted by the

devil) in your heart hold all this to be as true as tho you could see it before your eyes, yes, even more true and certain, in as much as your eyes and other senses only deceive you, while God, who has revealed this to you, remains the everlasting and reliable truth. Furthermore, whether this conviction has accomplished so much in you that you endeavor to live according to the truth that you confess, namely, that you fear and obey God because He is just; love Him because He is good; praise Him because He is holy and perfect, etc. And

III. Especially whether you look upon this God not only as your Creator but also, by the power of your Baptism, as your pious Father. Do you derive confidence and consolation from thinking of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who came into the world to save all poor sinners, and especially you, from the everlasting torment of hell? If you, by the accusations of the Law, which you feel in your conscience on account of your sins and misdeeds, are impelled and urged to seek grace and forgiveness in no one but in Jesus Christ, so that you seek Him, your Lord Jesus, in deep devotion, with out-stretched arms, as it were, with love and yearning apprehend Him as your only anchor in distress; cling to Him without letting anything in the whole world separate you from Him; surrender yourself to Him with all your powers of body and soul, and only wish to please Him and serve Him in holiness and righteousness all the days of your life—if you find this, then you need not worry: God demands nothing of you but faith, and this you already have, by the grace of God. May He also help you to keep it and

hold it fast in all storms and afflictions that may meet you, and in which you have no reason to lose heart, no matter how dreary and miserable the condition of your soul may be. If there is in you faith as a grain of mustard-seed, a spark of true longing and love, or, if these are not perceived, a heartfelt grief on account of this—then you may be bold in the Lord.

4. This is faith as viewed according to its essence. This is plain. Yet there are countless people who deceive themselves in trying their faith. Some people cannot perceive their sincere faith on account of affliction and melancholy, tho it is in their heart; others, resting in security and selfishness, arrogate to themselves a faith which in truth is not in them. In this difficulty we call attention to another and much safer way of ascertaining the genuineness of one's faith, namely, by observing one's life and conduct, his inward emotions and his outward actions as the works and fruits of faith. By their fruits ye shall know them (Matt. 7:16), Jesus says. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, and a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit. No, this is impossible and contrary to nature. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things. Therefore, James is perfectly right when he demands that we prove our faith by our works, in our lives; and what good would it do if one said he had faith but did not have the works belonging to it and invariably flowing from it, that is, a Christian life? In such a case, could he be sure of salvation? By no means. But how, then? Should works or a pious life be the

foundation of our salvation? Far be it from every evangelical Christian to think so! The merits of Christ, apprehended in faith, are our only foundation, and our sure foundation. But there may and shall also be works to bear witness to this faith and distinguish it from the dead faith of hypocrites. It is the sincerity of our works and not their merits that gives us boldness and courage in the trial of faith (See 1 John 3:7).

But the main effects of faith and, accordingly, the sure signs of a state of faith, are these: 1) faith cleanses the heart (Acts 15:9), namely, from all dead works, and permits no dominating sin to remain in a person; 2) faith overcometh the world (1 John 5:4) and thus the untidy love for created things, and trust in and fear of them, etc.; 3) believers strive diligently to put away the old man (Eph. 4:22); 4) in believers the Spirit struggles energetically against the flesh (Gal. 5:17); 5) the believer has a spirit of adoption whereby he cries Abba, Father (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6); 6) the believer rejoices in the Word of God and obeys it (Ps. 119:2, 8, 9, etc.; John 8:47; 1 John 4:6); 7) the believer is willing to bear his cross and the derision of the world for Christ's sake (Luke 14:27; Heb. 12:5, 10); 8) the believer will follow the footsteps of humility and patience of Jesus Christ (Matt. 11:29; 1 Peter 2:21); 9) the believer withdraws from the world and is not fashioned according to it in evil things (Rom. 12:2); and, finally, 10) above everything, the believer loves his Jesus more than anything else and, together with Him, all men, es-

pecially other believers and true, regenerate Christians (John 8:42; 13:34; 15:12; 1 John 3:11).

These are, very briefly outlined, the true criteria of the presence of faith, the new birth, and sonship. But whereas this matter is of the very greatest importance, I shall discuss it still more explicitly and comprehensively for the benefit of plain people and of those that are afflicted.

CHAPTER TWO

CONTENTS

Three main questions to be made to the heart in order to obtain reliable knowledge with regard to a person's faith and state of grace, namely:

1. Do you love God?
2. Do you love your brother?
3. Do you perceive in yourself the struggle between the Spirit and the flesh?
4. Do you find that you have been renewed to a spiritual mind?
5. Do you live in evangelical righteousness, subject to the domination of no sin?
6. Have you any inward desire and urge for fervent communion with God in prayer and in meditation on His Word?

Collect your senses and go into your own heart, come to yourself, as did the Prodigal Son (Luke 15), and put before yourself the following questions:

1. Is this God, which you know by faith as the highest good, in truth loved by you as such a great good? For it is love that flows from the true faith, and this works or expresses itself by love (Gal. 5: 6). But if this love is to be of the right kind, it must prevail in the heart, far excelling all love for created things, so that the heart may truthfully say: Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever (Psalm 73: 25, 26). God knew that Abraham loved Him from

the fact that Abraham put the knife to the throat of his own son, and we may also clearly know whether we love God when we gladly forego even things that are naturally dear to us as often as our love and obedience to God require it. From this it also follows that he who loves God hates sin and everything to which God is opposed. Hence the Psalmist says: Do not I hate them, O Jehovah, that hate Thee? And am not I grieved with those that rise up against Thee (Ps. 139:21)? For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments (1 John 5:3). It is also a good token of our love for God that we often think of God every day or, properly speaking, always have Him in our heart; for where our treasure is, there will our heart be also.

2. Have you not only no constant hatred in your heart against any person, but do you, on the contrary, even embrace all people with good intentions, not closing your heart against them when you see their distress; but helping them according to the circumstances and your own conditions and means? But this general love is not sufficient to assure you of your faith and new birth; in as much as this is found in naturally kind and pious people also. Therefore, keep on questioning: Do you also find in yourself a strange, loving affection for your spiritual brethren or those who are true believers and regenerate with you? The radii of a circle approach each other as they approach the center; likewise, the Christians approach each other in love as they approach Christ in faith and love and are finally united with Him in one Spirit. John says expressly: Whosoever loveth Him that begat lov-

eth Him also that is begotten of Him (1 John 5:1). Also: We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death (1 John 3:14). Similarly: Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love (1 John 4:7, 8). Faith at once brings forth brotherly love. Take Lydia as an example; as soon as she believed she said to the apostles: If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide (Acts 16:15). Another example is the jailor who, as soon as he became a believer, brought Paul and Silas into his house and treated them well (Acts 16:34). Exactly in line with this run the words of Spenser in his discourse on the characteristics of regeneration in Glaubens-Lehre: Especially if you feel in you a truly brotherly love. That is, when you observe an upright Christian, see such a one, hear about him, and notice things that may indicate that he is born of God, do you then find that your heart turns to him just as much or even more than to a natural relative of yours? Are you fond of intercourse with such people? Does the grace of God shed upon them make you as happy as tho it were shed upon yourself? Do you always prefer to have intercourse with such people, no matter how lowly they may be in the eyes of the world? Where this is the case, it is a sure sign that both parties are born of the same seed (P. 730).

3. Are you engaged in a daily battle with sin, and do you perceive the struggle between the flesh and

the Spirit in you? The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other (Gal. 5:17). This distinguishing mark is by all theologians considered to be one of the most reliable. Dannhauer, in particular, says: If you feel and perceive faith, then thank God; if not, be content with the struggle between the Spirit and the flesh. As tho he would say: This testifies sufficiently to your regeneration. For if there is a new principle in you that struggles against sin: a law in your mind that wars against the law in your members, this is the work of the Holy Spirit in your soul, and therefore you have received the Spirit, you are born of the Spirit; for that which is born of the Spirit is spirit; and that which is born of the flesh is flesh and therefore, in the natural order of things, cannot war against itself, tho there may at times be a sort of struggle between flesh and flesh. Therefore, let him who does not want to be deceived pay close attention to the kind of strife that he sometimes perceives in himself or in his heart. It may be a strife between two antagonistic inclinations of the mind, such as avarice and ambition, one of which must needs yield to the other, while the person is worrying and doubting and hesitating as to which one he is to choose, both of them being evil: in such a case there is no struggle between the Spirit and the flesh; it is only a strife of the flesh, an inner strife in nature itself, which of course may be found in unregenerate and unbelieving persons. In this self-trial we should also be reminded of what Paul says of the unregenerate gentiles, their conscience bearing witness, and

their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them, according to the evil or good works that they have done (Rom. 2:15). This accusation of the thoughts, which is purely natural, this natural emotion in the conscience when one either has evil intentions on his mind or has actually done something wrong, must not be mistaken by the unconverted for the strife between the Spirit and the flesh; for the latter is much nobler, it comes from the Holy Spirit and has a far better aim, namely, not so much to escape punishment as to show thankfulness and love for God, and it is much more far-reaching than the accusation and protest of conscience; for the latter is found only where there are plainly manifest sins and palpable works of darkness. But the war of the Spirit goes as far as the least obvious and the most secret of sinful lusts, which reason will not even recognize as sins, but which in the regenerate hearts are immediately felt and perceived, like the smallest speck of sand in the eye, and instantly they are regretted and bewailed. Here we may apply the following words by Luther: It is only godly people that truly feel that they have sin and commit sin, namely, that they do not love God ardently enough, that they do not confide in Him heartily enough, at times doubting whether He still cares for them, because they have shown some impatience under their cross, etc. As those persons may be sure of their faith who really perceive the war of the Spirit against the flesh, the strife between grace and nature, or the combat between the old and the new man, so, on the other hand, are those persons quite excluded from faith who perceive no such strife (Ex.

of Gal. C. 5). And Just. Chr. Schomer says: It is a bad sign that no strife is perceived, that the stream of sin keeps on flowing all the time without any worry on the part of the sinner, that there is peace at home, that the person is well pleased with himself. Such a one makes us understand that the Spirit is suppressed in him, that he is on friendly terms with his lusts, follows them as a slave, and is pretty well used to the yoke (Spec. Theol. Moral., C. H. 17).

4. Are you quite different in your heart, mind, and temper from what you were before, or would be if you followed the impulses of your nature as most people do? (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23; Col. 3:10). This change of mind in spiritual things cannot be attained without regeneration. The flesh is carnally minded, earthly, and vain, but the Spirit is spiritually minded and of a spiritual nature. Paul says: They that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. The mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace (Rom. 8:5, 6).

The lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life, care for the belly, and worldly wisdom are looked upon by a regenerate person with entirely different eyes. He knows something better, he tramples the world under his feet and by no means submits his heart to it; and by a daily renewal he withdraws as much as possible from what is behind him and reaches forth to those things which are before him. In short, his thoughts, talk, and acts are quite different from those of a man of the world, and when the world occasionally attempts to draw

him into its life he immediately understands its treachery; so he groans over it, takes fresh courage, keeps back, and thus overcometh the world by his faith (1 John 5:4).

5. Do you really and energetically aim at righteousness and holiness in your daily life? Here we have a clear criterion in the words of John: If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another (1 John 1:6, 7). Further: Hereby we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments (1 John 2:3). But whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected (1 John 2:5). Every one that doeth righteousness is begotten of Him (1 John 2:29). Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no (intentional) sin, because his seed abideth in him. And he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother (1 John 3:9, 10). He that keepeth His commandments abideth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us by the Spirit which He gave us (1 John 3:24). The following words by Paul are of the same tenor: If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God (Rom. 8:9, 14).

Now, let every one consider whether it is possible that the Spirit of God can lead any one from God to ungodliness, whether the Holy Spirit can urge

any one from holiness to unholiness. Well, then, if you wish to know whose spiritual child you are, that of the Holy Spirit or that of the evil spirit, watch your life and your actions everywhere in your daily intercourse and make out whether they agree with the rule of the Ten Commandments, in faithful obedience, in fear and love for your God—in short, whether they may be called works of righteousness and truth. Do you, like Abraham, walk before God in piety—not exactly perfect, but acting conscientiously, obediently, faithfully, uprightly, and devoutly? Do you, like Enoch, lead a godly life, or are you, on the contrary, licentious in your life and behavior, having practically no rule to go by but worldly fear and shame, or, at the best, a sheer dread of hell? Do you in everything depend on the merits and righteousness of Christ in such a manner that you yourself can do or leave undone whatever you please, supposing that God is not so strict, that He is good and merciful, and that He will not punish you, poor sinner, so severely, even tho you follow your natural bent, indulging in enmity, injustice, voluptuousness, drunkenness, haughtiness, or some other dominant sin? If you do, then let it be known that you have not the faith, neither are you a child of God, nor are you led by His Spirit; therefore you deceive yourself unmercifully if you, under such circumstances, entertain any hope of salvation, which in all truth can be nothing but carnal security and a Satanic delusion. This is clearly demonstrated by the many Bible passages quoted above.

But what of that? Is a Christian without sin? By no means. Faults and frailties, unwarranted de-

sires and lusts are not wanting among the saints of God; for original sin dwells in them; but they do no sin. Strange combination, you think? No; this is the way the Spirit of God Himself speaks: Whosoever is begotten of God . . . cannot sin, because he is begotten of God (1 John 3:9). He does not do sin (Rom. 7:17). He that doeth sin is of the devil (1 John 3:8). Christ will not recognize him (Matt. 7:23). But does Scripture contradict itself when it says elsewhere: All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God? And if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8)? Not at all; Scripture agrees very well with itself, but the children of the world have confused minds, so that they will not obey the truth, and therefore will not see and know the difference between having sin and doing sin, but confound the two things. The regenerate has sin, but he does not do sin; on the contrary, he suffers from it. His inward man actually delights in the Law of God, but there is another law in his members, warring against the law of his mind, and to his great vexation and sorrow it may inadvertently precipitate him into a sin; but he recognizes such sin at the same instant, it is immediately found in the conscience, lamented, and washed off in the blood of the Lamb. Now, then, a Christian is free from all evil intentions, he does not live after the flesh, he does not permit sin to prevail, he does not do works of darkness, and as long as he follows this course, Christ looks upon him as His obedient disciple, in whom there may be found much that is condemnable, but no real condemnation, because he is in Jesus Christ by faith,

and, as a particular proof, is not walking after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Rom. 8:1, 4).

6. Do you (outside of the hour of affliction) have a real desire and inclination to commune secretly with God in your heart, primarily being fond of hearing Him speak to you in His Word, fond of having it in mind, of hearing and reading it and of meditating on it, its admonitions and rebukes no less than its words of consolation and refreshing? Blessed is the man....whose....delight is in the Law of Jehovah (Ps. 1:1, 2). He that is of God heareth the Words of God; for this cause ye hear them not, because ye are not of God (John 8:47). We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he who is not of God heareth us not (1 John 4:6). Yes, the unregenerate understands none of the things of the Spirit of God, they are foolishness to him, a thing of vexation, he has an aversion to them, his soul takes no delight in them, as did the soul of David, in whose mouth the Law of God was like pure honey. The concern of an obedient subject is to understand the law, will, and commands of his master, in order that he may be more able to act accordingly. If a person has the good fortune to communicate in person with his superior and ruler and to learn to know his mind, it is a source of great joy to him, and his time does not seem long but very short. Next, do you find in you an urgent wish for the second part of the heavenly intercourse with God, that is, prayer to God and praise of Him, to speak to God as He speaks to you in His Word? We have heard that the children of God have received the Spirit of God, which Zechariah calls the

Spirit of grace and of supplication (Zech. 12:10). It is not a spirit of bondage and fear, making us shrink from the presence of God and from conversation with Him, but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father (Rom. 8:15). Or whereby we are led to God in childlike confidence, are encouraged to seek Him, confidentially complain of our distress to Him, and ask for His help. The unregenerate are not apt to be inclined to pray, and if they do feel like praying, they are urged from the outside, by impending distress or danger, etc. Under such circumstances even an ungodly person may come near unto God with his lips, and cry: Lord, Lord, while otherwise he pays but little attention to this Lord; but the regenerate perceive an inward urge, inclination, and motion which cannot come from any outside cause, and by which they are, often unexpectedly, encouraged in the spirit and urged to converse with God in secret, to devout prayer or, if this does not flow smoothly, to heart-groanings that cannot be uttered. Then one can perceive the blowing of the wind, as it were (John 3:8). Then the spark of faith and love is fanned into flame, then the heart beats with a holy longing for God, then we truly strive to embrace God, to kiss, love, praise, and thank Him with a holy hallelujah, being filled with holy wonderment at His majesty and with a holy longing to be swiftly carried away and placed before His throne. With a yearning that rises from the profoundest depth of our heart, scorning the world and renouncing all of its vanities, we may then sing,

*Up to heaven,
Up to heaven,
To eternal joys.*

O that I had the wings of a dove; then I would fly away and be at rest (Ps. 55:6). I desire to depart and be with Christ. The world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

*Heaven is my final goal;
There I'll rest my weary soul.*

CHAPTER THREE

CONTENTS

1. Refutation of all treacherous illusions on which hypocrites build their hope of salvation, while they doubt their own condemnation, to which they are surely destined. Among such illusions is their Christian name.
2. Diligent attendance at religious services.
3. The penitence and conversion which they pretend to attain to in due time.
4. Abstention from a certain sin or vice.
5. Natural bent in favor of a certain virtue.
6. The good opinion and hope of other people with regard to them.
7. Many people are no better, and yet they hope to be saved.

Take these six criteria: 1) love of God; 2) love of our neighbor; 3) the Spirit warring against the flesh; 4) renewing of the mind; 5) practice of righteousness; and 6) the soul's inward communion with God, and put them before your heart, in order to ascertain to which of the two parties you belong; then one of these three things will be the result: You will either clearly see that you are yet unconverted, unbelieving, and unregenerate, and at the risk of the loss of your salvation a true conversion must take place the sooner the better; or you find that in all humility you can answer a confident yes to all these questions, and then you have a good reason for shouting boldly: I will greatly rejoice in Jehovah, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for

He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness (Is. 61:10); or it may happen that in spite of all these clear-cut criteria you may still remain in doubt, not knowing exactly whether you ought to be in hopes of salvation or not.

In order to give these doubters some more light and possibly help them out of the mist, we shall add a few more remarks. And here is what I wish to say: Some of those who doubt their state of grace have a reason for their doubt, because they are not yet truly born again; other doubters have no reason to doubt, and despite all their doubts they are true children of God. This improper doubt we shall examine and refute on both sides, so that everything will be clear and distinct.

1. Some persons who are actually unbelievers doubt their unbelief, half-way assuring themselves of their salvation. On what foundation do they build? Only this, that they have been baptized into Christ and instructed in the doctrine of the true faith, which makes them suppose that the promise of Christ belongs to them: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved (Mark 16:16). But these people seem to deceive themselves intentionally; for they know very well that to believe on Christ is not only to confess Christ with the mouth and say yes to His teaching. If they believe the truth of the Gospel but do not follow it, even disgracing it by their lives, they are, together with the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida, doomed to a much more severe sentence than those of Tyre and Sidon, of Turks and gentiles.

2. Other really unbelieving and un-Christian persons may for some other reason doubt their own unbelief and assure themselves of their own salvation. What is their reason? Here is the answer: They are quite punctual in performing the outward duties at the divine services, gather diligently to hear the preaching of the Word, go to confession, attend the Lord's Supper, even pray in their houses or in church, going by a book or using their own words, but not from the heart or by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. These persons lose nothing at all by doubting—O that they could clearly see their own condition, see that they serve God only externally, but not in Spirit and in truth! Who requires such external, hypocritical practices from their hands? To God they are an abomination and a disgust, and He does not hear such sinners, even tho they cry the whole day: Lord, Lord! tho they spread forth their hands towards Him! for their hands are full of sin, their heart is shut up, and all their ways are disgusting to God (See Is. 1).

3. There may be other actual unbelievers who in a half-hearted way hope to be saved without any reason for it, their ground being that tho their present condition may be evil, they do not count on remaining in this condition always, but assume that they will be converted some time in the future, so that they may be saved when they die, no matter how wicked and ungodly their lives may have been. If these people would put off their hope as far into the future as they do their conversion, waiving their consolation accordingly, no objection would be made. But as they build on an absolutely uncertain time,

and, what is still worse, on the aid of an absolutely uncertain grace, reckoning without their host, as the saying goes, their foolishness is to be lamented rather than answered. He who bases the hope of his salvation on a conversion which is always postponed acts like the idiot of whom the poet tells us: He was to cross the river; but when he came to the brink of it he stopped—he wanted to stay there and wait until all the water had run away so that he could cross the river dry-shod. Seek ye Jehovah while He may be found; call ye upon Him while He is near (Is. 55:6).

4. There are other actual unbelievers who without any reason have a vague notion that they will be saved because they have broken with some vice to which they formerly had been addicted, supposing that such a course must prove that their conversion has been sincere, tho it came about from sheer human considerations—for the sake of their general reputation, for fear of an expected danger or punishment, and not because of love of God or gratitude or childlike obedience or the leading of faith and the Spirit, as is most plainly shown by the fact that such imaginary penitence and repentance is restricted to certain vices, but does not include the whole system of Adamitic sinfulness. Whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all (James 2:10). A single wound in your body may cause bodily death, and a single wound in your soul may cause eternal death. How much more so when you are filled all over with malignant ulcers and boils, of which only one or two have been healed, but not thoroly even at that.

5. Still other actual unbelievers and unregenerate persons doubt their own unbelief, and they hope against hope. Why? They notice that by nature they have one or two good attributes, such as temperance, righteousness, mercy, etc., and this natural gift they take to be a fruit of faith and of the new birth, thereby muddling, to their own great injury, the doctrine of the distinction between nature and grace. For example: brotherly love, heartfelt mercy and sympathy and forgiveness towards an enemy are unmistakable fruits of faith. Now, it is known that all persons, even the most cruel barbarians and heathen, who possess a sanguine temperament and bodies richly supplied with blood find in themselves, tho in different degrees, some inclination for love, compassion, and mercy. They do good to the poor and help them where they can; they are also willing to forgive and forget wrongs provided apology is made and good words are spoken.

Now, a person of this disposition may think: I have such a sensitive, kind, and forgiving heart, it must surely be a fruit of my faith and a proof of my new birth. But let no one judge too hastily. It may be that there is no faith at all, for such good things may come only from the temperament; for otherwise the natural powers may, when sanctified, easily work together with grace. To guard against deceit and error in so weighty a matter, it is well to pay close attention to this fundamental rule: all spiritual virtues and true fruits of faith are quite closely associated and connected with each other and cannot be separated, so that a person who has one

must needs have the other also; for otherwise he would be regenerated at one point and not at another, partly in the kingdom of Christ, partly in that of Satan, which is quite impossible and unreasonable, in as much as Christ and Belial have no fellowship with each other.

Now you may say: I am merciful, kind-hearted, forgiving; but are you also humble, chaste, sober, temperate, diligent, poor in spirit, hungry and thirsty after righteousness, etc.? If you do not find the latter in you, but have some unreconciled dominant vices side by side with your virtues, then let it be known to you that it is nature pure and simple and no grace.

6. There may be still others who in their outward lives behave very reasonably, honorably, and well, but who are themselves conscious of indulging in many secret vices and are well aware that the depth of their heart is still unholy and quite wicked. Being thus prevented from getting any consolation whatsoever or any good testimony from their own conscience, they are in the habit of seeking comfort in the good opinion which other people may have of them, and out of this they construct a sort of assurance which is a combination of hope and doubt. Particular mention should be made of a rather numerous class of quite simple-minded sinners who have a pretty good standing in the eyes of their pastor, whom they presumptuously make their god; and in as much as he does not make them very much afraid of damnation, there seems to be no danger from that quarter. Sad to say, perhaps the pastor himself does not know what the state of grace is. But

what foolishness! If our heart condemn us, as John says, how can the opinion of others help us? They are not the ones that are to judge us in the last day, but God, who proves the heart. Others might be induced by love to judge you favorably, but you have no reason for depending more on their judgment than on your own. As to yourself, depend less upon others than upon yourself; for no one knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of the man which is in him.

7. Finally, those seem to be most numerous who, without finding any token of a new birth in themselves (I mean faith that is active in love and obedience), still doubt their own certain damnation and promise to themselves that they are going to be saved. But on what ground? Oh, simply this, that of their equals there are countless multitudes who are no better—rather worse, maybe—but who expect to be saved, nevertheless, while they are indulging in arrogance, avarice, envy, wrath, quarrels, adultery, drunkenness, gluttony, all manner of voluptuousness, profanity, abominable conversation, and the like. Then they say: Well, this is the way of the whole world, in all classes and in all walks of life; it has been this way from the beginning, and it will remain this way to the end. From this they draw the following unreasonable conclusion: Tho it is stated in Gal. 5 and elsewhere in the Word of God that those who practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God, it is impossible that all those sinners are going to be treated so harshly. Good God, wouldn't that drive us into utter despair? Answer: Not necessarily; you are still living in the

time of grace, and by the grace of God you may be converted; but if you will not take the trouble to be converted, then you have to doubt and despair forever. In such a case the Word of God has no hope for you. But who can be saved under such circumstances? Answer: Only those who have the living faith and the practice of faith in obedience, whether they have a short or a long period of time for it after their conversion. But how few those people are; must all the others go to hell and find no grace? Answer: This is the teaching of Scripture in numerous places; but he who preaches a new gospel which is more agreeable to the flesh, tho he be an angel from heaven, let him be anathema! For according to the Word of God such a comforter deceives the people and leads them astray. But is the number of the saved smaller than that of the condemned? Answer: Yes, smaller by far—a very small portion, comparatively! In Luke 13 we read about a person who asked Christ: Lord, are they few that are saved? And He said unto them: Strive to enter in by the narrow door: for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able, because they do not seek rightly, that is, they depend upon their own works, as in Papacy, or on purely external religious services, or on a drowsy, coolheaded Christianity, like the five foolish virgins, and afterwards they think they have done pretty well. Very serious are the words of our Savior: Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way that leadeth

unto life, and few are they that find it (Matt. 7: 13, 14). And here it is expressly stated: For many are called (to the visible Church), but few chosen (to the heavenly joy) (Matt. 22:14). Oh, how few the chosen are! It terrifies me to think of it. Select from among the Christians of our day all those that the Scriptures in several places, especially 1 Cor. 5:11 and Gal. 5:19, 21, exclude from salvation by clear and distinct words, and the remaining crowd will be quite small. If no unbelievers, no unrighteous, no thieves, no swindlers, no sensualists, no gluttons, no drunkards, no whoremongers, no defamers, no murderers, no vindictive and unforgiving persons, no forgers, no perjurers come into heaven, but all, all are to be thrown into hell unless they, before it is too late, become entirely different, pious, righteous, and godly people, what will then become of most of us? Chrysostom, the splendid church teacher who otherwise spoke so many words of rich consolation, once addressed the great and very populous city of Antioch in the following language: How many people in this great city do you think will be saved? I say it reluctantly, but I must say it: Among so many thousands, not one hundred will be saved, and I have serious doubts even as to the one hundred. For have you noticed the wantonness and frivolity of our young people? The indifference and negligence of the older people?—You should note in particular that Chrysostom spoke these words in a better era of the Church, when the minds of the people were far less alienated from Christ than they are in our day. Some ancient writers tell us about a hermit who is said to have

seen in a special vision how human souls, like a dense snow shower, like a great squall of rain, fell into hell, so that the manes (spirits of the dead) who were there before had a good reason to ask, like Lusitanus, whether there still was a human being left in the world. The only reason why I mention such human traditions is that they agree so well with the prophetic word, as we have seen above and could, if necessary, be still further corroborated. One thing I wish to say: Consider the parable of Christ (Luke 8) about the four kinds of ground; what a difference between the condition of the believers and that of the unbelievers and, accordingly, between the chosen and the rejected; and here He does not speak about blind heathen, who comprise by far the largest number, but only about those who have received the seed of the Word or live in the external, visible Church. No wonder that Paul pronounces this explicit admonition: Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12). The words of Christ that few are chosen have, like a veritable thunderbolt, aroused many smug persons from their spiritual sluggishness. God grant that it may work the same way in you, my dear reader, provided you are still outside the state of grace, presumptuously and self-reliantly following the biggest crowd and being fashioned according to this world (Rom. 12:2). Do not think: An error should be considered less serious because there are so many that err, or that God, finding so many millions of impenitent sinners on that great day of judgment, should, for the sake of their countless numbers, abate His righteousness and not condemn them all,

as it may happen in the world when many hundred rebels deserve to be executed at the same time: the one seems to help the other, and only one tenth or some other proportion of them are sacrificed—at times the punishment may be made still milder. No, poor sinner, your figuring is all wrong! God will not relinquish one jot or tittle of His eternal righteousness (which so far is not reconciled with regard to you, because you have not yet accepted the full expiatory sacrifice of Christ by a true, living, and active faith), otherwise He would deny Himself. If there did not exist a single properly converted soul, no one would be saved either. Without holiness no one shall see God, no, none but those that are pure in heart (Matt. 5:8). Nothing unclean or unholy shall enter into the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21). Take no comfort in the fact that there are many like you. Let each man prove his own work (Gal. 6:4). Each one is rewarded according to his own work. From the fact that you have many co-workers in evil you can draw no conclusion whatsoever except that in the torments of hell you will have many brethren and partakers, and in that place you can not apply what is said of sufferings in this world: It is a solace in misery to have fellow sufferers.

It is certainly no consolation to have many comrades in hell; for they can assist each other neither by counsel nor by action, but they are rather a punishment to each other, aggravating the everlasting moaning of despair and the horrid gnashing of teeth. They were a part of the howling chorus of reprobates in this world, mutually egging each other

on to evil things, now they shall have to blend their voices in pandemonium. I dwelt rather longer on this point than on the former ones for the reason that in connection with my official duties it has made me sick at heart to see that the great multitude of impenitent sinners, above everything else, are in the habit of beguiling poor souls and leading them into carnal security.

These and similar ones are the false foundations on which hypocrites base their dubious hope. They doubt where there is no doubt. Why? Paul has said it once for all: The works of the flesh are manifest, etc. (Gal. 5:19-21). There is no doubt but that people doing such things forfeit the kingdom of God and are not going to inherit it at all. These hypocritical dubitables with all the ground that they are built on are characterized by Job as spider's web, which you can see thru and which bursts as soon as you touch it with your finger. These are the pleasant dreams with which Satan soothes the souls that are spiritually asleep, and keeps them jolly. But what does Job say? The hope of the godless man shall perish, and his trust is a spider's web (Job 8:13, 14).

CHAPTER FOUR

CONTENTS

1. Mistaken grounds for the fear of condemnation on the part of true Christians who have a feeble faith and who doubt their own salvation, which, however, is certain—such as anxiety and fear of having been cast away in God's eternal counsel.
2. Weakness in the trust and hope of faith.
3. Also in the fruits of faith and the gifts of sanctification.
4. That their progress in goodness is not perceptible enough in them.
5. That the souls are not yet completely torn loose from temporal things.

Over against the groundless hope of the actual unbelievers we shall now put the unfounded doubt of the true believers, who cannot be convinced that they are what they really are, and do not know whether they dare to hope for eternal salvation or not. But why? Maybe for one of the reasons given below, which we shall take up and consider as briefly as possible.

1. Some children of God are perhaps afraid that they have been cast away in the eternal counsel of God, and for fear of this they lose all hope of salvation. This idea is so foolish that I would not condescend to give an answer if it were not for sympathy with many poor souls who are afflicted in this manner, especially now that the theological controversies among the evangelical churches have disturbed the peace of many souls. Now, note this:

All those who have ever so little of the fruit of a sincere faith and of the love of God in their hearts and are sure that they actually strive to please God by a visible obedience—they have, according to the plain Words of Scripture, absolutely no reason for doubting their election; for they find the true proof of election in themselves, namely, their faith in Christ. Whosoever believeth on the Son shall not perish (John 3:16). All that which the Father giveth me shall come unto me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out (John 6:37). Now, if you notice that by a faithful coming, as described in the first part of this book, you keep close to Jesus, then you may conclude that you were given to Him from eternity; for otherwise you would not come to Him according to these words. Furthermore, since faith and love are inseparable, you are also permitted by the love of God to draw your own conclusion with regard to your own election. For it is said: We know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28). It must be added, however, that the eternal counsels of God, no matter what they may be in themselves, cannot be made into fixed rules for our hope or fear, for they are not manifest. On the contrary, what I am to go by, that I must see and know, and no person has a reason to consider himself cast away unless he finds in himself obvious tokens of being cast away and condemned, namely, an evil, unbelieving heart and a wicked life. From these tokens a person may know for sure that for the time being he has no part in grace; but this is no reason why

he should conclude that he cannot at any future time attain to a better hope, provided he will make use of the prescribed means. On the contrary, the fact that God still grants him time and a chance for conversion and invites him to salvation every day, goes to prove that God still has grace in store for him and does not wish his death and perdition, instead of having necessarily and entirely cast him away. In my opinion this situation may be made clear by a comparison which I now venture to make: He who proposes to judge the condition of a human being according to the secret counsel of God and not according to His revealed Word, which is present with us, acts as foolishly as a helmsman who, in a dark night, when the sky is overcast with clouds most of the time, goes to work to steer his ship by the stars that are visible off and on, putting his compass aside tho it is right before his eyes and shows the directions as accurately as the stars do. It is nothing but foolishness to worry about what happened in the eternity of the past, now that we only need to use the present time well and keep before our eyes the Word of God, which points out to us the sure way to heaven. If we only follow the way we shall not go astray, in due time we shall reach the promised land. Moses says briefly and strikingly about this matter: The secret things belong unto Jehovah our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this Law (Deut. 29:29).

2. Another believer may say: Of course I see that it is not fair to doubt the general grace and God's good intention and will toward me, so that I

should not fear but have a good confidence—but nevertheless, since this confidence is not what it ought to be, but is mixed with fear and doubt, I fear just on account of my fear, and doubt on account of my doubt. The reader will find this notion sufficiently answered above, as I tried to prove that not all doubt is condemnable or contrary to faith, namely, not the doubt that concerns our own salvation, but the one that desecrates the grace in Christ. By the way, it ought to be considered that there is a great difference between unbelief and weakness of faith. Unbelief is usually self-confident and does not worry much about its own salvation. Neither does it lament its lack of faith, does not doubt much, unless it be towards the end of life. The unbeliever even laughs and jokes when the children of God lament the weakness of their faith in his hearing. To him it seems so silly and melancholy. Who would not believe and hope that he will be saved? Of course there is no danger on that score. On the contrary, the believer is poor in spirit, hungry and thirsty after righteousness; he looks more at what is lacking than at what he already has; from reasonable cautiousness he scarcely believes his own heart, and because he, for the time being, does not perceive the reflex, sweet, self-conscious power of faith, it is difficult for him to soothe his trembling heart. This testifies to the weakness of his faith, but also no less to the sincerity and truth of his faith, which we discussed more extensively above and which we have now applied.

3. There may be other believers who worry and doubt not so much with regard to the weakness of

their faith as with regard to the meagerness and inferiority of the fruits of their faith, holiness and obedience, which are far from satisfactory to them. To this I answer: This dissatisfaction, provided it comes from the heart and produces even the most trifling effects, is a glorious token of a state of grace; for absolutely no pride and spiritual haughtiness can exist together with such a state of mind, while spiritual meekness, a sense of sin, and a daily conversion are apt to be present. What a shame that by a single sin, be it ever so trifling, we should offend our good heavenly Father! But may God have mercy on us—in our present condition, our nature being fundamentally corrupt, it seems impossible to avoid mistakes and frailties, which surround us everywhere. These would surely condemn us if we were under the Law; but since we are under the Gospel and have entered into a new covenant with God, He does not demand any such necessary obedience under this latter covenant as under the Law, but such obedience as we are able to manifest to Him by His own power. Therefore, my dear fellow Christian, you who lament your frailties and missteps, if you have uprightly begun to hate all sins and by no means intend to consent to a single sin, if the law of your mind wars against the law which is in your members without yielding, if you avoid all occasions for sin, if you pray earnestly to God to keep His hand above you in your daily strife, and on safe ground and with good intentions in your heart, walk as an innocent tho feeble child thru the world to the heavenly homeland—then, surely, God will not let you go nor cast you away on account of

your weaknesses, which you cannot get entirely rid of; for otherwise He could not take to Himself a single one of all the children of Adam, in as much as all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Indeed, no flesh can boast itself before the living God. Therefore He has shut up all things under sin in order that He might have mercy on all. For the consolation of these souls I might proceed to speak still more plainly if it were not to be feared that the vulgar children of the world, true to their habit, would draw a deadly poison of security from such consolation. But I shall venture to say this much: If you perceive any doubt as to your election and salvation on account of a lack of due obedience and of good works, keep in mind that Satan, that liar from the beginning, is not far from you and is still striving to pervert and falsify the merciful Gospel, mendaciously telling you that you must by all means be saved by your own works and life, that you must, to some extent, be your own redeemer, which is to desecrate and scoff at the most precious merits of your Jesus. To such temptations give the answer that you are well aware that you are a sinner, but also that Christ came into the world to save sinners. Now, if you accept this Jesus and in turn surrender yourself to Him, live in Him, are led by His Spirit, tho not at every step in particular, yet in all your conduct on the whole, strive every day toward betterment and renewal—then you should be made to know that to you there is really no condemnation, for by faith you are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1).

4. Some children of God may also be induced to

doubt their salvation on account of their very slow advance in goodness. It is certain that it properly belongs to the state of grace to make steady progress on the way to heaven, and not stand still, which is the same as to retreat. For as a ship lying in a strong current does not remain immovable but is either driven forward against the current by some force or is carried backwards by the current; in the same manner it can scarcely happen that a person remains immovable in his Christian life. And even if we could stand still without losing anything, it would not be permissible, in as much as our whole life is a journey, a race, a pilgrimage, but no stagnation. Why does God permit us to live so many years in the world except in order that we may increase in holiness? Otherwise it would be better to take us out of the world immediately after our new birth and conversion. But this calls for a few remarks: In the first place we must note that before entertaining any miserable doubt on this score we should be absolutely sure that we make no progress in our Christian life. For it may be that we are really going ahead while we suppose that we are going back, the difference observed between the present and the past being due to the fact that we know ourselves and our faults so much better now than before. Still another remark on this point: When it is said that a believer constantly makes headway it must be taken to refer to his whole life in general, not to each particular period of time. It must be taken as a certainty that when a believer dies he is beyond comparison farther advanced in goodness than at the moment following his conversion. There

are actually periods when a believer, by God's special permission, rather decreases than increases in godliness; but he will soon recover what he has lost and also make gains beyond what he had before. The third remark on this point is: Tho a person's progress is not so great and perceptible as he may wish, there may be real tho imperceptible progress. A healthy child grows daily, but we cannot notice the growth for every day, in some cases not even for a whole month. The hand on the clock moves every instant, but you do not observe it so easily until perhaps a quarter of an hour is gone. Note such things when you are inclined to worry about your poor progress—it may help you.

5. Finally, there may be a new cause for this anxious doubt, namely, that the soul still clings to earthly things. And since this concatenation is the main cause of our sin and of our corruption, a Christian may easily be led into anxious thoughts as often as he perceives it in himself. But here we have to consider that nothing save death itself can thoroly and fundamentally root out this entanglement, and that the work of grace is simply to weaken and diminish it by little and little and bend it under the love of God. To strengthen our hope in this respect we must not only look at such weakness in and by itself, but also put it up against the love of God. If our love, our longing, our desire for earthly things are greater than our love of God and our willingness to serve Him, it is not well with our soul, and our misgiving is only too well founded; but if a person loves God above everything and is willing to give up everything that is antagonistic to the love

of God, a moderate love of the world, which grace continually strives to subdue, cannot, injurious tho it be, cause condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, to them that walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. If this were not true, no human being could be saved.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONTENTS

1. Refutation of groundless doubts found in pious Christians, such as spiritual sluggishness and indolence.
2. Lack of perceptible, sweet meditation.
3. Must notice that their thoughts are not connected but are rambling in prayer.
4. Prayers are not answered.
5. The devil suggests evil and blasphemous thoughts.
6. They fear death.
7. They fear that they may fall from their faith and state of grace.

1. There may be true believers who doubt their state of grace and, accordingly, their salvation, because they are occasionally overpowered by a sort of spiritual indolence, their inner man becoming weary of and disgusted at prayer and other religious exercises. Now, it is certain that this spiritual distaste and reluctance in itself is not good, but quite contrary to the love and thankfulness to God, the right service of the heart, which we owe Him. It is also true that if such distaste for what is good were to last for some length of time, settling down as a permanent disposition of the heart, it would be a very bad sign, and might properly cause fear and doubt. But it is an entirely different thing when such an experience occurs only now and then or very rarely, especially when the person himself struggles

against this indolence and condemns it from the depth of his heart. Then it is right to mourn over it, but there is no cause for anxiety and faltering, and we must remind ourselves that this experience is common to all faithful, pious hearts; for there is alternation, as in the kingdom of nature so also in that of grace: there is summer and winter, day and night, heat and cold. Here belong also the following words by Müller: Do not despair, ye pious ones, tho ye find that ye are somewhat cold towards what is good. Do not falter tho your hearts are not led and drawn by the Holy Spirit according to your own fond wishes! Prove yourselves whether ye are heartily sorry for this defect and earnestly long for this leading of the Spirit; for this is exactly the work of the Holy Spirit in you (Love Kisses).

2. Of almost the same kind is a doubt caused in some, or rather many Christians, by a lack of perceptible, sweet devotion and exaltation of the heart in prayer. Such souls take a real delight in the Law of God and in conversation with God according to the inner man, they often humble themselves every day before God, confessing their unworthiness, praising and thanking God in prayer, etc. But they do not perceive such a warm flame in their spirit, such sweet feelings of love for God, of joy in God, of conversation with God, as they fondly wish for; or if it happens that at certain times they do feel some strong emotion of devotion and love, such blessed moments are so very brief, and their impression and opinion are that their hearts at once become cold: on account of which they perhaps hit upon dubious notions to the effect that the Spirit of God has de-

parted from them, or that they never had the Spirit, having deceived themselves by mere illusions. For such people the following may serve as a consolation:

There is one devotion that is essential and actual, and another which is experienced irregularly and occasionally. The latter is apt to be found where there is a tender, emotional heart whose good desires and spiritual exercises are accompanied by tears of love and similar tokens of emotion, but such devotion is often only something which nature can take comfort in. On the contrary, essential devotion is really nothing but a sincere, heartfelt willingness to cleave to God in faith and love, to humble oneself before Him by confessing one's weakness, to praise God in deep gratitude, and by a childlike obedience to obey His commandments. The heart that is honestly prepared and favorably inclined toward such things, and actually practises them tho in great feebleness, and yet with unfailing longing for more strength, that heart is in all truth devout, has communion with God and is actually led by His Spirit, in spite of a goodly share of spiritual drought, great darkness, and afflictions. For these things may indeed deprive us of divine consolation, but never of God's grace and love itself. Furthermore, grace can manifest itself most powerfully in this very weakness, where no consolation is felt, but where the person continues, persists, and endures, which is the proper exercise of faith. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed (John 20:29). Therefore be it known to you, O pious Christian, that if you simply walk before God with a sincere

heart, willingly submitting to God's will in all your doings and all your hardships, this faithful inclination of your heart will give you greater assurance than all perceptible devotion and sweetness and be to you a rock upon which all doubts and misgivings will be torn to pieces. There are such things as false joy and false sweetness, and they are very much like the true ones, but in themselves they are sheer illusions; but there is no true holiness unless it belongs to the image of God and bears the witness of the Spirit of God. Satan can fashion himself into an angel of light; but love of God and our neighbor he cannot imitate.

3. There might be still another cause for doubt, namely, that a person's thoughts are greatly distracted and deranged in prayer. To pious souls this is painful, and they experience extraordinary annoyance in attempting to prevent such distraction. Indeed, this living thing of ceaseless thinking, I mean our soul, by nature is so buoyant and flighty that in spite of all our exertions it seems practically impossible to keep it tied to anything definite for any length of time, no matter how important it is. Now, this is a great weakness, and when we pray to God it is very unseemly for us to be turning now our face, now our back to Him. Therefore we should, by previous meditation and other means, try our very best to check this confusion and gradually suppress it. What still may remain of this evil it is for us to pray God to pardon, and we should deplore and lament it before Him; but it would be unfair if a shortcoming of this kind should throw a soul into despondency and doubt with regard to grace and its

sonship with God, in as much as even the greatest saints have complained of it and have often confessed that in spite of all the pains they have taken they could not get rid of it.

4. That the answer to prayers is deferred for a long while gives some persons a chance to doubt their state of grace. They think of the words of the man born blind: God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and do His will, him He heareth (John 9:31). They think: Oh, if we were children of God, our heavenly Father could not possibly hide His parental heart from us so long. Long, long ago we prayed earnestly and urgently to Him to grant us this or that, but nothing has come of it, except this and that which tended to hurt us. Answer: 1. In temporal matters, yea, in some respects even in spiritual matters, God has made no absolute promise that He will grant the prayers of His children; but He has given us liberty to present our requests to Him and then wait for results from Him, in as much as we ourselves do not realize what we ask for. Therefore it is altogether certain that many a time God could not punish us more severely than by complying with our request and will; 2. It is on record that some great friends of God did not get what they prayed for. Moses associated with God as confidentially as one friend with another. He made a prayer which seemed unimportant, easy to grant, and not unfair, namely, that he and the rest of the people should be permitted to enter the promised land; but in vain, his petition could not be granted; he had to die in the desert. David, a man after God's own heart,

prayed fervently to God to spare his new-born son and keep him alive; but no, the child had to die. And what is still more: The only begotten Son of the Father, Jesus Christ, according to His human nature, prayed in Gethsemane that the bitter cup might be removed from Him; but no, He had to drink it—and He was the Son of God.

5. A still greater cause for fear and doubt is found by some believers in certain disgraceful and blasphemous thoughts that suddenly rise in their minds so that they are themselves astonished, not knowing whence they come and without receiving any heartfelt pleasure therefrom but, on the contrary, meeting such suggestions with anguish, grief, aversion, and disgust. Many theologians take this to be Satan's fiery darts which must be quenched with the shield of faith (Eph. 6:16). Others take it to be a home-grown fruit from our own sinful and naturally unbelieving heart, which occasionally gives out such poison. Be that as it may, whether it comes from within or from without, it is a movement which is not only unintentional but even against our will, and therefore it is not absolutely incompatible with our state of grace; it may strike a child of God with fear, but it must not be permitted to keep him in lasting anxiety and doubt about his salvation. I refer the reader to Part One, C. 4, where this matter has been discussed. But I would add that if such poor, afflicted souls only remain faithful to God in the depth of their heart, they are entitled to the consolation found in the words of the apostle James: Blessed is the man that endureth temptation (James 1:12), and also in the words of Paul: It is no more

I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me (Rom. 7:17). An act is not attributed to him who suffers it against his will, but to the one who does it. Therefore, the evil thoughts, whether they come from the devil or from our own flesh, in which there is nothing good, must by no means be attributed to the poor, suffering soul. The righteous God, who trieth the heart and reins, will be sure to pass a just sentence in this case.

I shall mention a fitting example. In Deuteronomy we read of a damsel who is betrothed to her bridegroom and has given him her word and her heart, as the believing soul has surrendered itself to Christ. She is met by a man in the field, and he forces her, for he was stronger than she. What kind of sentence does a righteous judge pronounce in this case? The man only that lay with her shall die, but unto the damsel thou shalt do nothing; for she did not do any sin worthy of death; for as when a man riseth against his neighbor, and slayeth him, even so is this matter, for he found her in the field, the betrothed damsel cried, and there was none to save her (Deut. 22).

6. There may be other souls that doubt their state of grace and, accordingly, their own salvation, for the reason that tho a Christian has no reasonable ground for shunning death but should rather, like the apostle Paul, in trustful longing wish to depart and be with Christ, they find that whenever they think of death they are struck with fear and terror, which they take to be a bad omen and a dangerous sign. Here we must make a careful search for the real and particular reasons for such fear of

death. If it is a love that has become attached to the good things of this world, which death threatens to take away, then this fear is not good, but shows that the heart has not surrendered itself to any honest denial of the world and of self. If you fear the heart-breaking pain and the horrible convulsions often occurring at the point of death, then your fear is only natural, and by itself is no sign of a bad condition; but it must be looked upon as a carnal weakness, for it is only fair that we should meet our last enemy with more courage and valor and strive to drive away the bitterness of death. But if this fear comes mainly from a contemplation of what instantly follows upon the heels of death, namely, judgment and the putting of the soul into an unchangeable condition, then a careful search must be made for the reason why a happy outcome of the judgment is doubted. If you doubt this because you do not take the grace of God and the merits of Jesus Christ to be reliable and good enough for the salvation of your soul, your soul is actually in danger, no matter how sincerely you repent of your sins, and this trembling doubt must be the unbelief that makes God a liar and denies His many good promises. But if you fear judgment because you, in great humility, watchfulness, and cautiousness, think your conversion is not good enough, assuming that you on your part have not cared so well for your soul that it is capable of accepting the general and powerful grace of God, a doubt of this kind is absolutely no sign of condemnation, as pointed out in Part One, C. 7, 4. In my opinion G. Sherlock is not wrong when he says: Many pious souls having a

weak faith are afraid of a danger to which they never are exposed, and instantly after their departure they find themselves happily deceived.

7. Finally, a child of God may invent painful doubt by assuming that his constancy in faith is uncertain, his mode of reasoning being: At present I am in the state of grace, I know that, and I thank God for this consolation; but who knows how long? Tomorrow, or next month, or a year from now I may fall from faith and a good conscience. This very thing has happened to others, who have begun in the Spirit and are perfected in the flesh, who for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away? Who will be responsible to me for what may happen before I die? And if I am not faithful unto death, I can expect no crown of life (Rev. 2:10).

This question has always been considered to be important. Therefore, in answering it we must be cautious lest we go to an extreme. The Papists declare absolutely that there is no certainty on this point, appealing, among other things, to the words of Augustine: They are sure of the reward of their constancy, but they are not sure of that constancy itself. For who can know whether he is to remain constant to the end? (*De Civit. Liber. II, C. 12*). The teachers of the Reformed Church, on the other hand, cut the knot with one fell blow, as it were, deducting from their doctrine of an absolute election that faith once properly established cannot cease and pass away and, accordingly, that the believers have no reason whatsoever for being in doubt on this point. Now, the aim of our teaching is to shun

both of these extremes as much as possible, and to avoid doubt and security with equal cautiousness.

That faith and righteousness may be lost we cannot deny when we study Ezek. 18:24; Luke 8:13; Heb. 6:6; and other places treating of the same subject; and sad experiences go to prove the same thing. But that the guilt and the cause of the fall are no undeserved or absolute withdrawal of grace on the part of God, but its voluntary refusal and rejection on the part of the sinner, is also seen from the passages quoted and from numerous other places in Holy Writ.

On this groundwork I build the following conclusion: A believer may be sure of his future constancy so far as the *means* of constancy are concerned, namely, the grace of God, which God will not withdraw from him as long as he desires it; for the gifts and the calling of God are not repented of (Rom. 11:29). But in as much as the grace of God has power over a person only as far as he admits it without resistance, such person, in order to attain to perfect assurance, must see that he never resists the work of grace intentionally. Here some one may remark: Well, this conditional assurance is not enough for me. Then I say: This must be enough for you, outside of the hour of affliction, at any rate, when you are unable to judge correctly; and a different assurance would not benefit you, for it would lead you into security. But the conditional assurance is in perfect harmony with the way of salvation, and keeps the heart watching and praying; the very fact that you realize that the struggle is not yet finished, will urge you not to put aside your armor too soon.

Think of Paul as an example. He must have felt quite sure of his constancy to judge by the way he spoke: For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:38, 39). And yet this certainty was not so absolute or far-reaching that he was induced thereby to neglect his Christian watchfulness and a daily renewal; for he says elsewhere: I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected (1 Cor. 9:27). Here it becomes obvious that the apostle looks upon his rejection as a contingency, that is to say, something not quite impossible, namely, in case he strayed from the way on which he had started.

Now, then, my good Christian, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Hold fast that which you have received that no one take your crown. You must by no means doubt God's faithfulness; for that remains when mountains and hills pass away. But if you have any doubt whatever about yourself and about your willingness to remain steadfast in what is good, this very thing might be a means of making you constant; but if you had no trace of this anxiety, it might be much easier for the tempter to find a chance to lead you astray. I look upon this feature of your doubt as a matter of cautiousness, and it will be of the greatest benefit to you, provided you do not go too far and needlessly disturb your rest in God. If this should happen, then

calm your heart by means of such glorious passages as these: I am continually with Thee: Thou hast holden my right hand (Ps. 73:23). My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who hath given them unto me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand (John 10:27-29). This is a promise which we would not exchange for the gold and wealth of the whole world. And again: Who (my God, my Jesus Christ) shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye be unreprouable in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. (How does Paul know that?). God is faithful, thru whom ye were called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Cor. 1:8, 9). Likewise: Faithful is He that calleth you, who will also do it (1 Thess. 5:24). And also: I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6).

End of Third Part

A SUPPLEMENT

consisting of a brief, readable treatise by du Moulin on the essential form and fashion of the justifying faith. On account of the similarity of the matter I am the more strongly induced to translate this from the French and add it to my book. I was astonished to see that the one who translated the other works of this author, especially the precious book, *La Paix de l'Ame et le Contentement de l'Esprit*, to which the following treatise is attached in all French editions, has left it out and has not deigned to translate it, tho in my opinion and that of many others it certainly deserves it. Thus, among others, Dr. Friedrich Adolph Lampe, professor of theology in Utrecht, wrote to me April 9, 1726, about said treatise by Moulin: I am also glad that you have run across the elegant and pious tract on faith by Moulin. It is quite according to my taste and that of our ablest theologians; and when it is properly considered, and the principles which pervade it are applied to particular cases, it will be easy to answer the questions that you have asked me.

I have translated the tract to the best of my ability, and where it seemed necessary I have added explanatory and confirmatory remarks.

THE ESSENTIAL FORM AND FASHION OF THE JUSTIFYING FAITH

The character and essence of the justifying faith is very well described in Art XXII of the Confession of the Reformed Church of the Netherlands: The true faith is the one that apprehends Christ with all His merits, appropriates Him as its Savior, and seeks nothing besides Him.

But those who describe faith as a certain assurance by which the believer constantly believes that his sins are forgiven in Christ, have, in my opinion, failed to grasp the nature of faith and seem to have intended to describe the perfection of faith rather than its nature.

For it would be an inexact definition of a human being to put it this way: A human being is a being which has an excellent soul, a well proportioned body, great understanding, and incomparable beauty, and is also living in its palmyest days; for these attributes point to the perfection of a person; not to the kind of beings to which he belongs. A baby is a human being as well as its father, and an ugly person is a human being no less than is a beautiful person. In the same manner it is a poor description of faith to say that it is a full and firm assurance of our salvation in Christ (for each person in particular); for tho this is indeed the acme and perfection of faith, it is not the essential form of faith.

This consists of three parts, as presented in said confession of faith: 1) to apprehend the merits of Christ; 2) to appropriate Him as one's Savior; 3) to seek no salvation besides Him. But this is found even in those who doubt and tremble; and who will deny that the father of the epileptic boy had the saving faith when he cried out and said: I believe; help Thou mine unbelief? Verily, it is highly indiscreet to teach children and simple folk that faith is a firm confidence and a full assurance that their sins are forgiven in Christ. This is like learning a master-trick of jumping from the lowest to the highest step of a flight of stairs. Therefore it often happens that beginners in faith soon become provoked and discouraged; and many that have made considerable progress in faith have painful pangs of conscience, supposing that there can be no faith without a firm assurance of salvation*, while this is often most abundant in those who are least satisfied with themselves, especially since it is impossible to worry sincerely and heartily about the lack of faith without having faith; or it is impossible for a person to perceive that he has only a small portion of faith with-

* In speaking of faith, our sainted Luther generally gives it the name of the sure, firm, and bold confidence, all of which Chemnitz shows to be the very fruit and result of faith, but by no means its nature and essence. Now, what Moulin presents here does not in any manner contradict what Luther teaches. At the time of Luther so many errors had crept into Christian life, including the Papistic doubt-faith, as tho no one could be sure of the grace of God, but must live in continual fear. Therefore it was not unfair for Luther to stress the indubitable heavenly confidence, or, as we called it above, the triumphant confidence, the highest degree of faith, which is most strongly opposed to the Papistic doubt. It should also be added that here and there the writings of Luther are so full of consolation for those who have a feeble faith as any one can wish, and they do not vary to the extent of a hair's breadth from this system of Moulin.

out first possessing its true essence. Far be it from us, however, to join the Papists in leading people into doubt and vacillation and depriving faith of its certainty, its firm confidence, upon which all our consolation depends; on the contrary, we exhort the believer to strive might and main to acquire the assurance and firm confidence that God is reconciled to us in Christ. We teach that a person shall not abide in a general knowledge of Christ and His benefits; for this is the unsound, worthless, and arid faith of the Papists. We teach that we must appropriate to ourselves the benefits of Christ as constantly and firmly as possible, and when we find that our trust and confidence is still weak and frail, we must persist in earnest and ceaseless prayer to God, entreating Him to speak peace to our souls and to let His Spirit bear witness with our spirit that we are children of God (Rom. 8:16).

This Spirit of God is the Holy Spirit of promise and an earnest pledge of our inheritance (Eph. 1:14). Therefore this Spirit is as infallible as God Himself; for it is God that speaks in our heart. And therefore we must shun the opinion of Bellarmin given in his Second Book, Third Chapter, where he says about justification that the witness of the Holy Spirit brings us only a probable, a reasonable certainty.

But in order to make further headway and define the real nature of the justifying faith within its own limits, we must carefully observe this distinction, namely, that confidence in God is of two kinds: 1) By one kind we flee to God, lean against and depend upon Him. Of this, David says: In Thee, O Je-

hovah, do I take refuge (Ps. 31:1). And Isaiah: Let him trust in the name of Jehovah, and rely upon his God (Is. 50:10); 2) the second kind of confidence in God is the witness of the Holy Spirit to the effect that God is reconciled to us in His Son Jesus Christ, and that eternal life belongs to us, from all of which there arises in us peace of conscience and a holy security. This confidence is a result of the one first mentioned. This order is carefully observed in the following: These things I have written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God (1 John 5:13). Now, then, here are two different things: 1) to believe on the Son; 2) to know that we have eternal life; and the former is certainly the cause of the latter. Here we have another passage to the same effect: In whom we have boldness and access in confidence thru our faith in Him (Eph. 3:12). Here we see again that our faith in Christ and our boldness and access thru faith are different, as a cause and its effect.

Between these two kinds of confidence, therefore, there is the same difference as between wishing and obtaining, between seeking and finding. By the former confidence we apprehend the promises of God, by the latter God seals these in our hearts. To aid our understanding, let us call the former a confidence of refuge, the latter one of feeling. The former flees to the grace of God in Christ Jesus, and the latter feels this grace sealed in the heart; which, therefore, are two entirely different things.

In order to throw some more light on this sacred doctrine—I find that it has not yet been made so

clear in our church as it ought to be—and in order to comfort timid souls, I wish to point out that the mere confidence and refuge or the emotion of the heart which in its need and distress strives to apprehend the grace of God in Christ, this is the real means of justification, the real essence of faith, and the causes for it are given below:

1) The promises are not given to the latter kind of confidence, but to the former: And it shall be, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved (Acts 2:21). Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matt. 11:28). Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out (John 6:37). Here we see that the promises are given to him who comes and to him who seeks refuge in God thru Christ. But that assurance of salvation shall be given to none but those who come with boldness and have in themselves the witness* of the Spirit of God that they are saved—that I find nowhere in Scripture. For all the commands and examples of holy boldness and assurance of salvation of which Scripture is full, serve to strengthen the faith and make it more perfect, and also to convince gainsayers who teach doubt and not faith. But from all this it does not follow that a person is to be justified by means of certainty of his salvation.

* Here the author quite evidently refers to the manifest and distinct witness of the Holy Spirit which is described in the Second Part of this book, and which, as stated above, is not immediately granted to all just and believing souls. But as to the indirect witness of the Holy Spirit which we perceive as inducement to prayer, war against the flesh, and other good exercises, no one must deny that such experiences ought to be common and, outside the hour of affliction, belong to all true believers.

2) By looking closely into this matter we shall find that the promises are made not to them that find but to them that seek, as finding, to be strictly correct, is a reward of seeking. Seek, and ye shall find (Matt. 7:7). And it would be unreasonable to say that eternal life is to be promised only to those who have found it. He who is sure of his salvation thru the witness of the Holy Spirit has already found his salvation. And if all believers at all times found this salvation sealed in their own hearts, they would need no more promises. But in as much as our faith is weak and unequal, we still must needs seek that which we already have found.

3) And, verily, those who in justifying faith peremptorily demand a perception and assurance of their salvation do not rightly understand themselves; for it is as tho they were to say: In order to be justified before God you must feel and perceive that you are justified. But this kind of faith contradicts pure reason; for you must be justified before God ere you can perceive your justification.*

* A host of writers insist upon a strong and firm assurance of the forgiveness of sins, tho such assurance is only a result of justification, which does not always follow immediately upon the forgiveness, and is, least of all, a preceding means of justification, which, as Moulin quite justly observes, would be unreasonable—like putting the horse before the cart, as we say. The Papists, therefore, are doing us an injustice by accusing us of an absurdity, especially Wazqvetz: By the justifying faith the sectarians understand that peculiar faith that, depending on the promises, a person believes and trusts that all his sins are forgiven thru Christ (I Secunda Disp. CCIX, Cap. I, N. 1). These words are true or false according to our interpretation. The Papist uses them only to disgrace us, saying: Just look at these absurd Lutherans! They teach that we are to obtain the forgiveness of sins by believing that the sins are already forgiven. If I ask: Where shall I begin in order to be justified and to enjoy the grace of God?—they say: Only believe it is so. Is it not an unreasonable matter? One that is not yet justified shall believe that he is in order to be justified!—But here the Papists attribute to us an

4) Therefore it becomes necessary to recognize two functions in faith. One is the direct power by which we embrace and apprehend Christ; the other is the reflex power, by which we know our own condition and perceive that we are apprehended by Christ. By the former we really believe on Christ; but by the latter we ascertain that we believe, and the faith which has apprehended Christ, softly and sweetly reclines in itself. But there are many who have actually accepted Christ without distinctly per-

opinion which we hardly ever thought of. We know that the trustful confidence works in two ways in justification. Before justification this confidence is turned to Christ (direct); after justification it points to the grace already received, and rests sweetly upon it (reflex). In this manner the saving faith has two functions in our justification. First, when the sinner repents of his sin and contemplates the evangelical promises, faith is kindled in his heart by the Holy Spirit, and He exalts the heart of the poor sinner and draws it to Christ; so that the troubled sinner, with mournful longing, apprehends the Lord Jesus with all His merits and thinks in his heart somewhat after this fashion: O Thou Lamb of God who bore the sins of the world! May Thy merits, Thy blood, Thy death be credited unto me in this anguish and distress! In Thy sacred wounds I hide myself. Between me and the judgment of God I place Thy death, Thy suffering, Thy satisfaction.—In such longing and confidence in Christ faith takes its beginning in our conversion. It is the first function of the true faith, and as soon as it takes place, justification with God in heaven also takes place, so that God proves and applies His holy Gospel to the poor sinner, declares him justified and free from condemnation for the sake of the Savior, whom he has apprehended in faith. Thereupon, after justification has taken place, faith also comes to its second function! For as the penitent sinner is now justified before God by faith, there arises in him boldness, rest, and peace in his conscience, so that he now considers himself justified, praises the grace which he has received in Christ and takes comfort therein. Justification, therefore, does not mean that I should immediately say to a person who is repenting of his sins: Believe that your sins are forgiven in Christ! No, that his sins are forgiven, a person believes after his justification. But to a sinner who only now repents of his sin I say: Behold the Lord Jesus Christ, He has paid for you; if you ask for His grace, appeal to Him, apprehend Him and carry Him before the judgment of God, then God will justify you. In this manner the poor sinner must apprehend the Lord Jesus and appropriate His holy merits, and then he will be justified. Thereupon, when he is justified, he may in the name of God believe that he has received grace in Christ.

ceiving that they have accepted Him; and these are nevertheless justified. For it is unquestionably true that we are justified by the direct power of faith and not by its reflex power; or, we are justified not because we perceive that we believe, but because we believe.

5) Therefore we must carefully note what this is: to believe unto salvation; it is nothing but coming to God thru Christ, about which Jesus Himself says: I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst (John 6:35). In these words it is obvious that belief and coming mean one and the same thing, and everlasting life is promised to all those that take refuge in Christ. Similarly: Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out (John 6:37). Come unto me all ye that labor, etc. (Matt. 11:28).

Since difficult words must be explained by means of easy ones, and not easy words by difficult ones, it is reasonable and fair to explain believing by coming, and not coming by believing.

6) Experience teaches us that many come to Christ and earnestly embrace Him without being able to perceive any consolation in their soul for many years. But that they have actually accepted Christ in earnest is obvious from the fact that they can endure all the terrors of conscience and all attacks of melancholia; they do not desist from what they have once apprehended, but constantly struggle against their spiritual afflictions, saying with the prophet Isaiah: I will wait for Jehovah, that hideth His face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him (Is. 8:17). There is no doubt but

that such persons are justified, tho they do not find it in themselves; for this passage is firmer than heaven and earth: It shall be, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved (Acts 2: 21).*

7) I further say that the power of faith works most vigorously where this reflex power, the sweet peace of conscience, is not experienced. It is not worthy of wonderment that we depend upon the goodness of God at a time when the Lord says to our soul: I am thy salvation (Ps. 35:3). But it is worthy of praise and wonderment that we cling to God when He hides His face from us. This is what Job did when God hid His face from him and held him for His enemy (Job 13:24). When he might have taken his flesh between his teeth, and put his life in his hand (Job 13:14) (according to some commentators he must have bitten his own flesh on account of excruciating pain, his life being on the point of passing out of his hand like a bird) he still cleaved unto God with the little remnant of life that was left in him, and believed in spite of what he perceived and felt, saying: Behold, He will slay me; I have no hope: Nevertheless. I will maintain my ways before Him.

8) And since faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen (Heb. 11:1), it cannot be denied that we have faith when we apprehend the grace of God in Christ even tho we

* This passage, which is exceedingly rich in consolation, must not be taken as a hypocritical cry, Lord! Lord! but must be understood as an earnest longing and cry of a penitent soul—this passage, I wish to say, the Holy Spirit seems to be determined to drive home with unusual force, giving it in three different places (Joel 2: 32; Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:13).

neither see nor feel it. But those who by the inward witness of the Holy Spirit have attained to a faith which is full of light and consolation, do not only walk in faith, but to a certain extent even by sight.

According to the reasons mentioned above, I therefore hold that the essential form of faith, also called the aspect of the justifying faith, consists in our coming to God thru the merits of Jesus Christ, and not in each individual person's assurance of his own salvation. For altho these two things are connected with each other, so that our coming to God thru Christ cannot be perfect until it has caused in us a firm assurance of our salvation, we are not justified by means of this assurance of our salvation but by means of our coming to Christ; for the real cause of our being justified is that we seek our salvation in Christ and depend exclusively upon Him, which can be done with fear and trembling, without any certainty as to the outcome, as a malefactor surrenders himself completely to the mercy of the king, tho in terrible fear of losing his life.

I must not deny that doubt is surely a great weakness in faith. But there are two kinds of doubt: one (which it would be more proper to call anxiety) is the believer's doubt about his salvation; but in spite of this he cleaves unto God, and he has no hesitation as to whether he is to depend upon God or not. We have an example of this kind in the disciples who, when the storm terrified them, cried to Jesus, who was sleeping in the ship: Save, Lord, we perish! The other kind of doubt is that the heart hesitates, not knowing whether it is to take refuge in God or not. The doubt of King Jehoram was of

this second kind: Behold, this evil is of Jehovah; why should I wait for Jehovah any longer? (2 Kings 6:33). This disease is mortal, and very few recover from it after they have advanced so far as to think evil of God, to nurse a sort of grudge against Him. But the kind of doubt first mentioned can easily co-exist with the justifying faith, as may be seen from the above reference to the apostles, whom Jesus rebuked on account of their little faith, tho they were saved by their faith.

Such doubt is truly something to be ashamed of, and yet it is a certain sign of a justifying faith, in the same manner as weakness is a sign of life in a person. Whoever has such worry and doubt about his salvation, also has godliness in himself, tho he misuses it to some extent and turns it into terror. But be this as it may, this godliness is a work of faith. I therefore find that it is a dangerous teaching to claim that the justifying attribute and nature of faith is to be sure of one's salvation. Thereby many have fallen into deep despair, and a theologian holding this opinion will find it impossible to satisfy and strengthen a trembling conscience without upsetting his own theory; for he must finally come to the admission that faith has vicissitudes of its own, that man is not saved by any certainty of the goal of his faith, but that it is God who is merciful to us for Christ's sake. Furthermore, as long as conscience flees to this firm support it is without danger; and the trembling faith, tho sick, being unable to rejoice in its God, is still living, for it leans up against God.

The origin of this error is due to a misunderstanding of the following words by James: Let him ask

in faith, nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord (James 1:6, 7). From this passage the wrong conclusion is drawn that whoever labors under doubt and fear can expect no justification. In the first place it might be said that in this passage the apostle speaks of those who ask for wisdom but not salvation; but no matter what the apostle means by wisdom, the following verse removes the whole difficulty: A doubleminded man (properly: a man having a double heart), unstable in all his ways. Here it is made known that the apostle speaks of a man who does not honestly cling to Christ, but divides his heart between the false and the true religion, hesitating as to whether he is to depend on God or not. But the believer having a weak faith does not deserve this bad name: he should not be called a man having two hearts as long as he trusts in God thru Christ with an upright heart and does not seek salvation in any one else, even if he trembles in his confidence and has not attained to the right degree of full certainty. I also wish to add that there are other and equally clear and unmistakable testimonies of the justifying faith, besides the assurance of this salvation, and they are all the gifts of sanctification which spring from faith as their source; for faith works thru love (Gal. 5:6). And wherever you find Christian gentleness, unvarnished godliness, an ardent love, a sincere zeal for the glory of God, you may boldly say of such a person as James says of Abraham: Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith

made perfect. For whatever is good in us is a work of faith. Furthermore, in order that no one shall accuse me of defending all doubt, I want to add that the firm confidence is not only the perfection of justification, but even its very nature itself. But since faith has a double aim and purpose, namely, Christ and the benefits of Christ, the firm confidence is not equally necessary in both. The first aim of faith is Christ, the second is salvation. The first and essential aim of hope concerns things to come (Rom. 8:25). But faith aims at the present. The love of Christ in God is the aim and goal of faith; for the believer shall have salvation yonder, but Christ he possesses even at the present time.

Therefore it is absolutely necessary unto justification that we apprehend the first aim of faith in great confidence and hold it fast unswervingly, and this is a firm trust: that we depend on Christ, the true aim, and remain firm with a sort of holy stubbornness, even if we have some fear and doubt with regard to the other things that we have in view. But whoever does not apprehend the first and most important aim of faith with a firm conscience is doubleminded and is in such a condition that he cannot be justified, and he should not dare to expect anything from the Lord until he has done these two things: First, and above everything else, he must believe and hold as an unquestionable truth that there is salvation in Jesus Christ and in none other, and that there is no other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved (Acts 4:12). Next he must trust in and depend upon Christ with his whole heart and surrender himself

completely to Christ. If this confidence is not firm, faith has not attained to its justifying quality,* and even if such a person may be justified before God, his justification is not yet sealed for him in his heart, and he cannot be assured that there is no other name under heaven but that of Jesus wherein we must be saved, and next a complete trust in Him. As to the second aim of faith: salvation, it must be embraced with a firm confidence; but if this confidence should not happen to be so very firm and sure, it does not follow that there is no justifying faith present, provided conscience with a firm trust apprehends the first aim, which is Christ. For a person's justification is brought about by confidence and trust in Christ; this trust in Christ will finally—sooner or later—bring assurance of salvation, and this will never fail. For justified by faith, we have peace with God thru our Lord Jesus Christ.

May God give use grace to hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end (Heb. 3:14); looking unto the author and perfecter of our faith, Jesus (Heb. 12:2); being confident that He who began the good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ. To Him, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory and praise for ever. Amen.

* When we compare this with what the author has stated above with regard to the right ground of faith, there seems to be some contradiction, unless we assume that by the "justifying quality" of faith he has not understood justification itself, but the exalted perception and assurance thereof. The latter is no doubt aimed at by the words of Richard Baxter: It is asked whether there is a justification of which the sinner is assured by a declaration made by the Judge in his conscience? Answer: Those who are justified will sooner or later become conscious of their justification by the light, or at least rays, from the face of God, but in most persons this consciousness is dim and vague.—If this "justifying quality" of faith is taken to mean this assurance of justification, which the above seems to indicate, the author's inconsistency is only apparent.

CONCLUSION

Here you have, dear reader, my thoughts about faith and its powerful perception and reasonable test; also P. du Moulin's tract on faith.

In view of the multitude of books published in our day I would not have written this little publication if I had not firmly believed that up to date, as far as I knew, no one had taken up this highly important matter for discussion in the order I have followed and with the aim that I have had in view; and when I began to search for assurance of our faith and state of grace, it would have been as welcome to me as anything in the world if some one had handed me a book like this one.

I am well aware that neither my book nor my humble person will meet with kind friends exclusively, but that hostility will be aroused in some minds. As to the latter, I wish them to consider that I do not force my opinions upon anybody, nor do I presume to teach men of learning; but I try to be of aid to souls who in their simplicity strive for salvation, especially if I may, by the grace of God, in some manner help feeble and troubled consciences and thus bring to others the consolation which I myself have experienced. May a pious soul here and there find edification in this effort of mine, and I shall ask for no thanks, except that such a one breathe a devout prayer to God for my poor soul, lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected.

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